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## Labyrinth

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The labyrinth is an archetypal form found in disparate cultures across eras spanning from prehistory to the present day, when it has experienced resurgence in popularity due to interest in its psychospiritual applications. Regardless of how it is styled, a labyrinth is marked by a shape, usually a symmetrical one, containing a unicursal path to or through a center point. This distinguishes it from a maze, which is multicursal and contains dead ends. Following the path of the labyrinth, the traveler is eventually and inevitably brought to the center and then back out again. While travelers may not know where exactly they are on this labyrinthine path, they are never lost, but rather, somewhere along the way they need to travel. As a result, the labyrinth has become common both as a metaphor and as a symbol of the human pilgrimage through life. A great deal of conjecture exists about its history, origins, and purposes, suggesting that the labyrinth has proven fertile ground for the imagination for millennia.

Its universality among prehistoric cultures indicates the so-called classical labyrinth was a primitive form of symbolic communication, perhaps an earliest form of written transmission. It was drawn from a central cross surrounded by

four angles and four seed points that were connected until seven circuits were contained in its circle. Cave etchings of this particular labyrinth appear circa 2000 BCE in Spain (Saward 2002). These symbols appear at approximately the same time in the Indian subcontinent, as well. Later, multitudinous stone arrangements of the similar symbols appeared in Scandinavian soil, often near the coast, leading some to speculate that seafarers would walk them in preparation for their journeys over water.

In mythology, the labyrinth first appears in the Greek lore surrounding the Minotaur of Crete. Unmistakably, the Cretan labyrinth was a built environment, an architectural structure, yet coins from Knossos featured the rounded, two-dimensional form of the classical labyrinth as its signifier. Later, Romans exported labyrinth mosaics throughout the Roman Empire (Kern 2000), from Great Britain to Eastern Europe to North Africa. Some were purported to be sizable enough for people to travel on horseback; others were too intricate to serve anything other than decorative purposes. Roman labyrinths are distinct for their sharp angularity, both in their pathways and their outlines.

The Hopi tribes of North America had a squared version of the labyrinth that they used in addition to the classical labyrinth (Conty 2002); it was unique in having two entrances. The Pima tribes, in their depictions of labyrinths, placed a human figure at the very entrance, in what later became known as “The Man in the Maze” pattern. This man was thought to be

seeking the mythic place of his origin as a place of eternal return. Labyrinths were associated with a variety of burial rituals in Celtic cultures as well as Egyptian society, where they were believed to protect the sanctity of the tomb.

Despite its strong association with pagan rituals, the labyrinth was adopted rather quickly by the early church. In an Algerian church was found a labyrinth dating from the fourth century BCE (Matthews 1970); its center circle contained the slogan “*Sancta Ecclesia*,” translated “Holy Church.” The destination of the spiritual journey was no longer reunion with the earth but inclusion in corporate Christendom. Interestingly, there was a profusion of varying forms of labyrinths across different churches during the Middle Ages, some square, some circular, and a few octagonal.

At Glastonbury Tor, thought to be site of the first church built in England, an oval-shaped labyrinth appears to have been carved into the landscape the tower sat atop, so that entrance to it would be gained by walking the steep incline of winding circuits. Such large-scale, three-dimensional labyrinths also appeared in Peru, where they figured as features in the geoglyphs of totemistic animals used in the rituals of indigenous earth-centered religions.

By and large, Christian labyrinths belonged in the interiors of churches rather than their exteriors, although turf and hedge labyrinths were fairly frequently found in English gardens and church grounds. Often, the labyrinth was placed near the entry of the church building. These labyrinths were sometimes called “*Chemin de Jerusalem*,” the Way to Jerusalem, because they allowed European churchgoers to enact a pilgrimage to the Holy Land at a time when both its distance and ongoing Crusades made such travel nigh impossible. Members of the clergy would walk the labyrinth as an Easter ritual representing Christ’s decent into hell, bodily resurrection, and ascent into heaven. Many monks traveled the labyrinth on their knees.

Perhaps the best known Christian labyrinth is found on the floor of Chartres Cathedral. Completed sometime in the early thirteenth century, its 11-circuit course led to a 6-petalled rosette in

the center, outlined in more than a hundred lunations. Much speculation has existed around the esoteric numerology and sacred geometry of the various labyrinths that appeared in churches (Lonegren 2007). Whether or not the Chartres labyrinth was devised as a specifically Marinal devotion, it was obviously not cruciform, as was the octagonal Maltese labyrinth so suggestive of more martial Roman forms (Fig. 1).

General consensus holds that the Chartres labyrinth pays homage to the feminine aspect of the divine dimension with its womb-like appearance evocative of not only actual birth and death but also spiritual rebirth. The continuous pathway can be viewed as representative of the original passage through the birth canal. Some have even suggested that the Chartres labyrinth was actually used as a birthing instrument; either way, its feminine form would be unmistakable to worshippers.

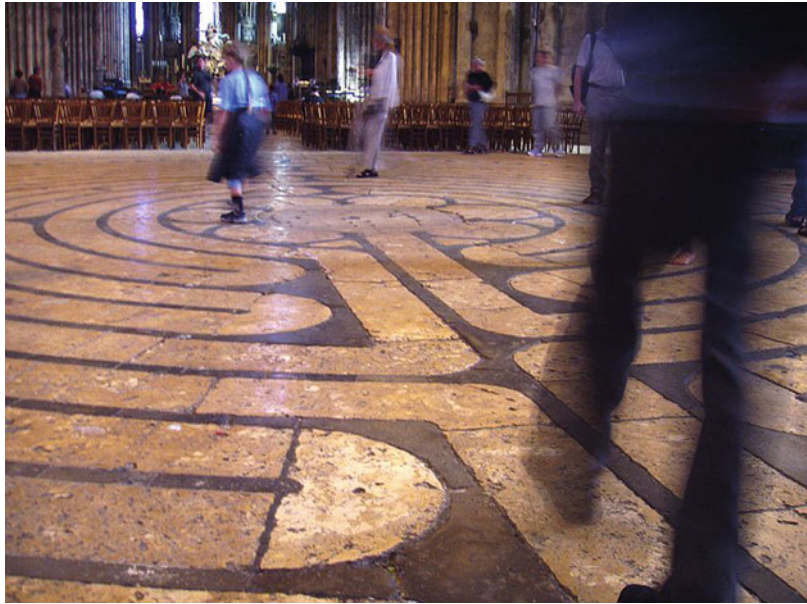
Many churches and cathedrals saw their labyrinths removed or hidden in the centuries that followed, quite possibly as part of a larger repression of the feminine principle or a backlash against vestigial goddess worship from older traditions. Evidence exists that some pagans may even have used the labyrinth in their mating rituals. The obvious physicality of a walking the labyrinth might have suggested a sensuous and immediate experience of the Divine that organized religion would attempt to control more closely in the West.

It is precisely such kinesthetic engagement that has recently made the labyrinth so appealing to contemporary travelers whose spiritual yearnings have been unfulfilled by religious dogma and formalized worship. In a contained and sanctified way, it offers travelers a chance to practice walking meditation and full-body prayer. In doing so, it combines active and contemplative approaches to self-realization (Artress 1995).

A labyrinth is clearly an exercise in intentionality. Its traveler is no further along spatially than when the walk was begun and actually backtracks at several different points. The labyrinth thereby challenges some dominant notions of linear progression, time urgency, and outward orientation,

**Labyrinth,**

**Fig. 1** Walking the labyrinth at Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Chartres, France (This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Labyrinth\\_at\\_Chartres\\_Cathedral.JPG](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Labyrinth_at_Chartres_Cathedral.JPG))



suggesting that meaningful personal journeys might involve internal shifts that are as significant as external ones.

As a visual metaphor for journeying within, the labyrinth has also served as a powerful imagistic representation of the psychotherapeutic process, as well as the spiritual quest. The circuits of a labyrinth are vaguely reminiscent of the whorl of a fingerprint, that powerful symbol of personal identity (Attali 1999). The possibility of truly knowing one's own self emerges as one looks inwards.

The existence of a sacred interiority becomes recognized and transitional/transformational space gets created in depictions of the labyrinth. Today people may trace finger labyrinths as a meditative practice or else contemplate line drawings of the labyrinth which they can either "walk" with their eyes or consider as a unified symbol of wholeness. Entire classical labyrinths can be easily constructed from just a few simple marks drawn in the earth. The labyrinth can in turn serve as a sacred experience, sacred space, or sacred image.

Such versatility allows the labyrinth to help its travelers bridge some of the mind-body divide, paradoxically by allowing them to ground themselves in the numinous. Circumambulating the labyrinth is a right-brained activity that allows for flashes of intuition. The winding way

becomes clear, and in that process, wandering suddenly becomes purposeful. For this reason, ritual use of the labyrinth now often occurs at liminal times (Curry 2000), whenever people find themselves at a threshold in their lives.

## Commentary

The labyrinth has been called the Mandala of the West because of its apparent usefulness as a meditative tool and nonlinear activity. It seems to be a culturally consonant symbol that expands consciousness and contains the potential for both psychospiritual integration and healing. The strong revival of interest in labyrinths in Western societies has given rise to numerous organizations promoting their use, organizations that are religious and secular alike, resulting in an international movement to increase their availability in shared spaces. Literature on the topic has proliferated in recent decades.

Even as research into the past and future uses of the labyrinth continues, however, it runs the risk of remaining speculative on the question of its distant origins and almost global ubiquity. What seems clear is that the growing popularity of the labyrinth is a response to a contemporary

spiritual yearning to feel more grounded and centered. Through its indirection and reversals, the labyrinth appears to provide people an alternative to the frenetic pace of modern life and a greater sense of continuity with the past, possibly by suspending animation to a degree. Its symbolism has remained alluring and evocative through millennia of human history.

## See Also

### ► Biblical Psychology

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## Lacan, Jacques

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Jacques Lacan (1901–1981) was a French psychoanalyst associated with the literary and philosophical movements of structuralism and post-structuralism. A notoriously abstruse thinker, Lacan, like many French intellectuals

associated with postmodern thought, has often been accused of being deliberately obscure in his writings. This is particularly true of his major work, the *Écrits*, which is noted for its difficulty.

Lacan is known for his claim of a “return to Freud,” though in actual practice this amounted to a radical reconfiguration of Freudian psychoanalysis as Lacan attempted to effect a synthesis between Freud’s biologically driven psychology and the linguistic theory of structuralists like Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson. Freud’s biologically founded subject is thus replaced, by Lacan, with a linguistically constituted subject, with the Freudian drives and even the body itself transliterated or overwritten by culturally specific signifying activities. In this view, the linguistic register of one’s culture channels and determines the directionality and movements that the biological drives assume. The Freudian unconscious, formerly the a priori wellspring of irrational drives and biological pulsations, is also viewed as a linguistic product, an a posteriori consequence of our entry into the linguistic register. The unconscious possesses rules analogous to the syntactical structures which govern the conscious linguistic subject, hence Lacan’s famous claim that the “unconscious is structured like a language.”

Lacan is perhaps best known for the three orders of the *imaginary*, the *symbolic*, and the *real*. The imaginary order is inaugurated by what Lacan described as the “mirror phase” which occurs roughly at six months of age. In this phase the child identifies with a “specular” and exteriorized image of itself, in an actual mirror or in the mirror of the “other,” which it then introjects in order to stabilize and master its bodily sense. The imaginary order, being based on this fundamental misrecognition of the self in the form of a falsifying image, thus results in a state of alienation.

This alienation is compounded by entry into the symbolic order (or linguistic register) which occurs when the child is forced to accept the “law” of the *Name of the Father* (*le Nom du Père*). With the adoption of language, the subject is inscribed or overwritten by signifiers, thus being

made subject to the regulative strictures and organizational principles embedded within the culture's system of signification. The symbolic order is therefore *Other* to the subject, being imposed and not truly adopted. Lacan's ubiquitous use of the term *Other* most often refers to this otherness of language. The direct consequence of entry into the linguistic register is "symbolic castration," a notion which replaces Freud's oedipal drama and its threat of actual physical castration with the subject's loss of *jouissance*, an untranslated term that refers to a preoedipal enjoyment of the object no longer possible for the linguistic subject. In keeping with this rejection of Freud's biological schema, Lacan replaces the organ of the penis with the symbolic phallus, a term which refers to this preoedipal state of dyadic fusion with the maternal object.

The real is much more difficult to describe, as it is the order of experience which completely resists symbolization. It may be the undifferentiated state of being that precedes linguistic acquisition or it may refer to significantly traumatic experiences which resist articulation.

Lacan's theories have generated considerable interest among philosophers, literary and religious studies scholars, and feminists preoccupied with continental thought generally and the post-modern "decentered" subject specifically. His influence is particularly evident in the psychoanalytic work of Julia Kristeva.

## See Also

- [Kristeva, Julia](#)
- [Postmodernism](#)

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## Laing, Ronald David

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## Life and Career

Ronald David Laing was born on October 7, 1927, on 26 Ardbeg Street in the Govanhill district of Glasgow and died on August 23, 1989, in St. Tropez, France. Like his father, Ronald Laing was musically gifted and received a Licentiate in music from the Royal Academy of Music at age 16. At 17, he enrolled in Glasgow University, and at 18, specialized in medicine. Because of the Korean War, military service was mandatory, and so in 1949, Laing did basic training. After a brief apprenticeship in neurosurgery at Killearn in 1950, Laing spent 1951–1952 as an army psychiatrist. In 1953, now a captain, Laing was placed in charge of the Army hospital in Catterick, in Yorkshire. Soon thereafter, he left the Army for the Royal Gartnavel Hospital and Southern General Hospital (Glasgow), where he worked under Dr. Ferguson Rodger. Rodger brought Laing to the attention of Dr. J. D. Sutherland, the Director of the Tavistock Clinic. With the help of Sutherland, and his successor, John Bowlby, Laing came to London in 1956 to train as a psychoanalyst (Burston 1996).

During his psychoanalytic training, Laing completed *The Divided Self*, a classic in existential psychotherapy (Laing 1960). His second book, *Self and Others*, appeared in 1961 (Laing 1961). From 1962 to 1965, he worked as the Director of the Open Way Clinic, founded by E. Graham Howe, one of the few places in Britain where Freudian and Jungian therapists worked together comfortably. In 1964, Laing and Aaron Esterson, another Glaswegian psychiatrist, published *Sanity, Madness and the Family* (Laing and Esterson 1964). Laing also published *Reason & Violence: A Decade of Sartre's Philosophy* with South African psychiatrist Dr. David Cooper that same year (Laing and Cooper 1964).



## Critique of Normality

In February of 1967, Laing published *The Politics of Experience* (Laing 1967). Though not his best book, it was the most influential, and one feature of the book that gripped many readers was Laing's sweeping critique of "normality," which Laing described as a state of profound self-estrangement or alienation – alienation being a hot topic at the time. By Laing's reckoning, the galloping self-estrangement that plagues Western civilization fosters a progressive attenuation of the average, adjusted person's critical faculties and their openness to transcendental experience, a state more akin to a deficiency disease than to genuine mental health. What is lost to normal people are not merely instinctual urges, or the memory of specific events or losses, as Freud suggested. The awareness of the tragic, the sublime, and the absurd, of the prevalence and persistence of evil, and of the peace that passes understanding – these innately human sensibilities are severely stunted, if not entirely extinguished in the struggle to adapt to an increasingly one-dimensional world.

In retrospect, it is interesting to note how often Laing disparaged normality with religious tropes and metaphors. In chapter 3, for example, he says (p. 68): "We are all fallen Sons of Prophecy, who have learned to die in the Spirit and be reborn in the Flesh" (Laing 1967). And again, in chapter six:

There is a prophecy in Amos that a time will come when there will be a famine in the land, 'not a famine for bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.' That time has now come to pass. It is the present age (Laing 1967, p. 144).

Without saying so in quite so many words, passages like these implied that the loss of the sacred as a feature of *normal* experience is linked with the problem of individual and collective violence. But according to Laing, the escalating scale and widening scope of violence in our time is *not* the result of innate propensities to violence and indiscipline – a "death instinct," as Freud thought – but of *the violence we do to ourselves* in our efforts to adapt to an increasingly irrational world that is bereft of genuine transcendence.

In other words, Laing implied that there is a strong correlation between the numbing routine, the mindless consumerism and the shabby ethical compromises of daily life in postindustrial society, and the steady proliferation of evil.

That being so, it is important to note that *The Politics of Experience* was published at the height of the Vietnam War, when Christian, Jewish, and Muslim fundamentalism had no appreciable impact on world affairs. For members of Laing's generation, who came of age during the Korean War, religious wars were a distant memory, rather than a growing and undeniable threat to global stability. Much as he lamented the loss of the numinous, Laing was not advocating a return to a repressive, theocratic society or advocating the revival of religious creeds based on the unreflective embrace or vehement defense of particular forms of belief. Had he lived to witness our present global predicament, Laing would probably have characterized the resurgence of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic fundamentalism as a reversion to *pseudo-religious* attitudes and passions, rather than the genuine article.

## Metanoia

In any case, in contrast to mere normality, Laing maintained that true sanity can only be achieved through the dissolution of the socially adjusted ego (or persona) in a process which he termed "metanoia." Ego transcendence, said Laing, can be sought gradually and deliberately through meditation and spiritual practices, or it can occur spontaneously. The mad person, said Laing, is often catapulted into this process unawares and, without skillful guidance, will go astray, exiled indefinitely in the demonic realms that enshroud and obstruct our access to the holy. However, given appropriate care, many psychotics can recover their emotional and intellectual equilibrium without recourse to psychotropic medication or other intrusive or coercive treatments, with the help of a seasoned therapist who is in touch with his or her own psychotic core and is not intimidated or overwhelmed by the severity of the patient's symptoms.

Like Jung before him, Laing borrowed the word “metanoia” from the New Testament to describe the dissolution of normal egoic consciousness. When translated from the original Greek, this word is usually rendered as “repentance.” The problem with this commonplace translation is that it dwells primarily on the subject’s sense of sinfulness and his (or her) earnest desire to shed sinful habits and desires. But in the original Greek, the term “metanoia” connotes an epistemological upheaval, a radical change of perspective, and a total and irreversible change in one’s view of oneself and the world – in short, an epiphany or enlightenment experience more akin to the ancient idea of “gnosis” than to moral reform or reconstruction.

### Laing’s Christian Roots

Though few readers were aware of it, R. D. Laing combined a rare appreciation of Asian wisdom and spiritual practices with a heartfelt immersion in Christian spirituality – a trait that he shared with E. Graham Howe and Alan Watts. Nowhere is this more apparent than in an interview with Yoga scholar Georg Feuerstein, entitled “Sparks of Light,” which appeared in 1983. “Sparks of Light” contains many of his most profound reflections on spirituality, but was not delivered in his usual style. Laing himself acknowledged this, admitting that he was finally expressing himself in a Christian idiom that he had become “... less embarrassed about affirming in the course of the last thirty years or so” (Feuerstein 1983).

Why embarrassed? During the Cold War Era, when Laing rose to prominence, people tended to regard anyone who spoke often and earnestly of their faith outside of their immediate circle as being somewhat odd and ill educated. However, this statement also conveys the misleading impression that though his reluctance to speak about it had diminished in the last few decades, his faith had been constant throughout. This is simply not so. Indeed, the cumulative impression one gets is that Laing spent most of his adult life as a reluctant and sometimes deeply anguished agnostic who longed for the consolations of faith, but could not

overcome his doubts and misgivings sufficiently to affirm what he desired to believe – sometimes ambivalently, sometimes wholeheartedly. This is the real source of his “embarrassment.”

What kind of Christian was Laing, when he was not overwhelmed by doubt? As a teenager, Laing was exposed to the Evangelical-cum-fundamentalist variety of Calvinism and to the older “Celtic Christianity” that arrived in Scotland with Brendan the Navigator (c. 484–c. 578) and St. Columba (521–597), both of whom played a significant role in the building of Iona Abbey on the Isle Iona, in the Lower Hebrides. By the age of 14, Laing claimed that he had emphatically Evangelical Christianity in favor of the latter, Celtic variety. This claim is born out of his on again/off again relationship with the Very Reverend George MacLeod (1895–1991), who like Laing, incidentally, was a native of Glasgow who rose to the rank of Captain in the British Army. McLeod was the founder of The Iona Christian Community, an ecumenical community dedicated to the preservation of Celtic Christianity and the erasure of world hunger and poverty, based on the Isle of Iona in the Lower Hebrides. Though few people are aware of it, Laing spent many weeks there over the course of his career. Indeed, in the early 1980s, Laing even pondered the possibility of situating a foundation to be called St. Oran’s Trust on this fair island.

Laing’s leanings toward Celtic Christianity are also evident in his remark to Feuerstein that we are all one in “the Universal Fire.” Indeed, said Laing, our individual souls are nothing but “sparks” emanating from this universal fire. Classicists contend that the idea that the soul is a “spark” of a Divine Fire probably originates in the Orphic religion, but gets taken up by Plato in the fourth century BCE and subsequently, by the Stoics and neo-Platonists in the Hellenistic-Roman era. While originally a school of pagan philosophy, Neo-Platonism and the emanationist approach to theology later took on Jewish, Christian, and Islamic forms, and as we survey the history of Western spirituality, the imagery of the soul as a Divine spark becomes a common idiom for mystics of all three monotheistic traditions.

Another striking feature of his talk with Feuerstein is that when asked to share the fruits of a lifetime of introspection, Laing responded that he discovered “that hope is justifiable.” The term “hope” does not surface often in Laing’s work, and though he vigorously repudiated the suggestion, many readers – friends and critics alike – found *The Politics of Experience* to be an angry and eloquent expression of overwhelming despair. If so, of course, Laing had clearly recovered some of his optimism in the interim. Meanwhile, the suggestion that hope is justifiable and that this represents a hard-won discovery on his part, says a great deal about him personally.

That being so, it is also instructive to note that Laing tries here – and not for the first time – to link the idea of love to the project of scientific inquiry and that Laing often despaired of getting psychiatrists to see that viewing their patients primarily or exclusively through the lenses of the natural scientific attitude is profoundly dehumanizing. The idea that science is (or ought) to be informed by a loving, reverential attitude toward nature was self-evident to someone like Einstein, but is odd and incongruous to most scientists, so Laing justified this linkage by pointing to the destructive potential of scientific research that lacks this basis. He said:

If you investigate and inquire into the world without love, you don’t find anything worthwhile. If you look at a tree or a frog or anything at all without the eyes of love, then you obtain only loveless, heartless knowledge. When such knowledge is accumulated and applied to practices of scientific technology, it becomes the most destructive form of knowledge ever discovered. Even the worst black magic cannot vie with the destructive capacity of science. Its very method is to destroy what it looks at in order to discover its elements.

## See Also

- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Existential Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Levinas, Emmanuel

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Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) was a Talmudist, ethicist, and continental philosopher whose thought has left a lasting imprint on contemporary philosophy and theology. His sophisticated ethical system that understands the self to be radically responsible for the Other has challenged conventional theories of selfhood, subjectivity, consciousness, ethics, metaphysics, language, and social relations. Furthermore, his ethical philosophy is beginning to find its way into psychological discourse concerning psychotherapy, human development, and definitions of selfhood.

Levinas was born in Kaunas (a.k.a. Kovno), Lithuania, in 1906 to a moderately affluent, Orthodox Jewish family. In his formative years, he was educated in traditional Hebrew school and was also heavily influenced by the work of



Russian novelists such as Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. In 1923, Levinas traveled to Strasbourg, France, for formal education in philosophy. Shortly after, he went to Freiburg, Germany, where he studied phenomenological theory and methodology under both Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. These experiences impacted Levinas for the remainder of his intellectual career. Levinas translated Husserl's work into French, making him the first to introduce Husserlian phenomenology into the French academy (later read by Sartre and other prominent thinkers). Husserl and Heidegger remained the primary dialogue partners within Levinas' philosophical works. He viewed their thoughts on consciousness, history, ontology, and metaphysics to be representative of the greater Western philosophical tradition he wished to engage and challenge.

Conversant in both Hebrew Scriptures and Western philosophy, Levinas represents a unique perspective on ethics. His project is sometimes described as *translation*, a communication of ancient Hebrew wisdom through the more dominant and universalizing trends of Greek rationality and the academy. Levinas' project continues to be mined for its far-reaching implications upon religious studies, philosophical systems, and psychological paradigms.

The historical context of Levinas' life further enriched the content of his writings and critique. Levinas' loss of his father, mother, and two brothers at the hands of the SS in Lithuania, along with his own imprisonment for 5 years during World War II, left a profound impression on Levinas' thought and interaction with Western philosophy. He claimed that many trends within Western thought had created an allergy to ethics and a form of ethical immunity for persons in the world. He understood many Western systems of morality to be failures and dangerous appendages to the violence making of the ego and human history as a whole. Levinas argued for movement away from the *love of wisdom* that had sustained Western thought since the ancient Greeks (and can be seen in modern science and psychology) to a *wisdom of love at the service of love* recognized within biblical tradition. Levinas called for

"ethics as first philosophy" rather than ontology, traditional metaphysics, epistemology, doctrine, or sacraments.

Levinas' concern about violence, along with his desire to provide an account of human experience/phenomenology that recognized the inherent ethical call in the face of the Other, provided the basis of his first highly celebrated work, *Totality and Infinity*. In this work, he argues that the ego is not at rest within itself, but rather has a metaphysical desire for something beyond its own sameness (or immanence). Though the ego often defends against otherness by reducing the Other to totalizing depictions (through intentional consciousness), there is a compelling command within the face of the Other that calls for responsibility. Levinas understood the face of the Other to bear a trace of the Divine (or infinity/transcendence). The dialogical philosophies of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig were indelible influences upon Levinas' assertions concerning the irreducibility of the Other and the requirement of justice in human relations. As Levinas' work evolved, this responsibility became even more radical and his language for it more intense. By the time he wrote his second major work, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas had come to emphasize the Other as bearing an alterity as radical as God's alterity. Furthermore, the Other's otherness, in Levinas' thought, wounds the banality and complacency of the ego and denucleates and decenters it. The ego loses its primacy and sovereignty and, instead, is hostage, persecuted, and traumatized by its inexhaustible responsibility for the Other.

For Levinas, one's psyche is ethically constituted and called forth into identity. The Hebrew expression, *hineni*, meaning "here I am," was his most succinct definition of the human psyche and the human self. That is, the self is always an ethical responsiveness, not a self-assertion or noun. To argue these points, Levinas engages in complex analysis about intersubjectivity and time, primordial encounter, interhuman subjectivity, and sensate experience.

Interestingly, Levinas peppers much of his philosophical treatises with rich religious terminology and illustrations (e.g., substitution,

expiation, glory, Divine, transcendence, hineni, idol, and Abraham's departure from his homeland). This has created significant contention in the field of Levinas' studies concerning the theological characteristics of Levinas' thought. Some argue that his philosophy was fundamentally Jewish while others want to preserve a purist depiction of his thought as philosophical. This issue is complexified by Levinas' confessional writings and Talmudic commentaries. Levinas was not entirely clear about the relation of his religious beliefs to his philosophical works. However, he was clear that he considered himself a translator of Hebrew thought (ethical concern for the Other as represented in ancient tradition) into and through Greek thought (dominant Western tradition). Though, he did not like the title "Jewish thinker" or "Jewish philosopher" to describe his work.

In addition to the works listed above, Levinas wrote many other social and religious commentaries and philosophical articles and books. By the end of Levinas' career, he had taught in the prestigious philosophy departments at the University of Poitiers, University of Nanterre, and University of Sorbonne. His impact on the landscape of 20th European continental philosophy has been and continues to be quite significant. Such thinkers as Blanchot, Derrida, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Lyotard, Marion, Pope John Paul II, and Ricoeur are just a few of the many noteworthy figures within Western thought that came under Levinas' influence.

## Commentary

Levinas did not write directly about psychology in most of his works. Scattered references can be found – mostly of a critical nature – about the naturalistic, mechanistic, and reductive practices of psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Despite this, Levinas' thought has slowly begun to make its way into psychoanalytic dialogues, with comparisons done between Levinas and Winnicott, Lacan, Freud, and Jung. Existential-phenomenological schools utilize Levinas' work to further bolster claims about the irreducibility of the human

person. Conferences and journals are forming that specifically target the interaction between Levinas' ethical philosophy and psychological systems and practices. Often, this interface takes the form of a fundamental challenging of dominant paradigms within modern psychologies. Reductive theoretical systems and practices have come under serious critique utilizing Levinas' methodology. Furthermore, the nature of consciousness, subjectivity, the ego, and the relation between self and the Other are often the topics addressed in these conversations.

Modern psychologies have frequently functioned as an extension of Western philosophical frameworks and out of a long lineage of Greek thought. As such, the Greek emphasis upon generalization, universalization, rationality, and immanence remains the preponderant base of contemporary psychology. Consciousness and rationality have been emphasized alongside of naturalistic and universalizing depictions of selfhood.

Furthermore, the individual ego is often valorized, with individuation and independence as core goals of human flourishing (in Western psychologies). Language of coping, cohesion, adaptation, and integration are among the many descriptors of a higher functioning self within the world. Seldom are theories and practices developed that understand the self as a "moral event" or emergent from ethical interchange and justice. Some theories recognize the need for social interest (e.g., Alfred Adler) or interpersonal engagement (e.g., Harry Stack Sullivan) but are far from making ethics a "first philosophy."

Levinas' critique of Western consciousness and the Western ego as self-reflexive and transfixed with itself is a frequent theme throughout his work. His depiction of an ethically constituted self challenges the fundamental primacy of the ego and construes the ego as vulnerable and exposed to the calling of the Other. Psychological appropriators of Levinas' work often accuse psychoanalysis, cognitive-behavioral theories, and a variety of other paradigms as being caught up in this "egology" wherein the monadic individual and his or her

rationality, affective functioning, and behavioral repertoires constitute the human person. The Western ego, in Levinas' thought, has become an idolatrous entity within which persons became trapped, preoccupied, and tormented. Persons cannot find escape from themselves. Levinas uses the story of Odysseus and his return to his homeland as an example of the prodigal and self-returning version of the ego in Western thought. In contrast, he describes the story of Abraham – who is exiled from his homeland and journeys to a land unknown – as an illustration of a self lived beyond the confines of itself.

Instead of freedom being understood as individuation, living congruently with one's biological needs/drives or self-actualization, Levinas suggested that freedom is born from responsibility for the Other. Ethical interchange and moral attunement are more original than ontological expressions of personhood. Instead of the "I" being sovereign and imperial, it is a response to the imperative found in the needs of the Other. The ego is perpetually called outside of itself and into a selfhood beyond the practices and history of itself (sameness). Levinas utilizes the illustration of God commanding Adam into being at creation, thus showing that the self is first commanded before anything else.

The prophetic quality of Levinas' work and the translation of Jewish ethics into contemporary systems of thought is poignant and a powerful corrective to dominant skews in modern, Western psychologies.

## See Also

- [Anti-Semitism](#)
- [Bible](#)
- [Buber, Martin](#)
- [Communal and Personal Identity](#)
- [Consciousness](#)
- [Ego](#)
- [Ethics and Ethical Behavior](#)
- [Existentialism](#)
- [God](#)
- [Heidegger, Martin](#)
- [Holocaust](#)

- [Immanence](#)
- [Jewish Law](#)
- [Kristeva, Julia](#)
- [Lacan, Jacques](#)
- [Liberation Theology](#)
- [Love](#)
- [Narcissism](#)
- [Nazism](#)
- [Phenomenological Psychology](#)
- [Postmodernism](#)
- [Power](#)
- [Psyche](#)
- [Psychoanalysis](#)
- [Psychology](#)
- [Psychotherapy](#)
- [Reductionism](#)
- [Relational Psychoanalysis](#)
- [Sacrifice](#)
- [Self](#)
- [Talmud](#)
- [Transcendence](#)
- [Wisdom](#)

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## LGBTQI and Queer Studies

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In 1995, Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner wrote that the only way to capture queer theory is through “a kind of anti-encyclopedia entry” because “queer theory is not the theory of anything in particular, and has no precise bibliographic shape.” In the nearly 20 years since Berlant and Warner’s article, queer theory has taken shape – nearly having a canon. This rapidly growing discourse of subaltern, deviant, and/or minoritized expressions of sexual desire – what we usually call lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer – and the rapidly shifting political environment increasingly allows scholars to ask and answer such questions in public forums without risking professional reprisal.

However, the canon of queer theory is a significantly different body of literature than lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) studies, which in turn is different from LGBTI religious literature, queer theology, and LGBTI psychology. To create an encyclopedic entry of these disparate bodies of literature is to

first capture the way in which they are intimately entwined with each other. First they are all anchored in the lives of LGBTI and queer identified persons (by self or by others; currently, previously, or in the future) and their plights for meaning-making in a broader culture that is often inhospitable to full flourishing. Second, religious intolerance and homophobia affects LGBTI psychology, identities, and health, while queer studies see queer expressions of sexuality and gender already deeply present in major world religions. Third, LGBTI positive psychology makes the reclamation of religion more possible for LGBTI persons. Fourth, the history of religious influence on sexual practice, sexual morality, and human sexual relationships is writ large in our contemporary culture and understanding of our selves. Take, for example, the strong rhetorical tension of the “culture wars” that pins “the moral majority” against the “homosexual movement.” Finally, the deeply embedded religious assumptions and ideologies of those who have created the history of LGBTI and queer identities (e.g., sexology) are still a body of work that needs to be written – those assumptions teased out and demonstrated as intrinsically woven into our secular understandings of LGBTI and queer identities.

## Queer Theory

The trinity of texts at the center of the queer theory canon are Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, v.1 (English translation – 1978), Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990), and Eve Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). Despite the 1976 French publication of *History of Sexuality*, the start date for queer theory is said to be right around 1990, the term having been coined by film scholar Teresa de Lauretis. Each text undoes an important cornerstone of assumptions of sexually and gender diverse individuals. Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* traces the influences for the possibility of modern discourses around deviant sexuality, arguing centrally that the repression of the Victorian era actually proliferated discourse around sexuality. Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* argues in part that the closet functions as a control

mechanism for everyone's sexuality – it is universalizing, rather than minoritizing. Butler's *Gender Trouble* argues that there is nothing natural about gender, rather all gender is simply a repetition of cultural scripts. Together these texts, now sacred as canon in their own right, work to deconstruct the most prevalent assumptions we have of sexual minorities: that our gender expression is somehow unnatural, that our sexual-social experience is fundamentally different, and that our sexualities are in opposition to prim and proper notions of sexual morality. Other key writers in this field include Anzaldúa, Haraway, Fuss, Berlant, and Warner. This emphasis towards the deconstructive is what sets queer theory apart from LGBTI studies.

## LGBTI Studies

It can be casually, but rather unprecisely, stated that in the USA lesbian and gay studies began in the years just after the Stonewall riots. However, in Europe the date is much earlier, with the 1949 publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* with its robust chapter on "lesbians" – unquestionably an attempt to explain lesbians from a socially affirmative standpoint. She challenges the stereotype of a lesbian as a woman who wears mannish clothes and has a rough demeanor. Beauvoir writes about lesbian sex with a poetic tone. This kind of positive and affirmative explanation – which still concretely and realistically engages with cultural discrimination and stereotypes – is indicative of LGBTI studies.

Some 30 years later in the USA, key texts of LGBTI studies include Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" drawing a direct connection between patriarchal oppression and the displacement of economic, physical, and emotional energies of women towards men. David Halperin's "Is There a History of Sexuality?," investigating ancient world praxes of sexuality, arguing that ancient understanding of human sexual difference looked much more like natural dispositional variation of appetite than does our modern notions of identity constructive sexuality. Gayle Rubin's "Thinking

Sex" – which is a notable crossover piece into queer theory – and works by historian John D'emilio, anthropologist Esther Newton, and art historian Douglas Crimp all have a central and formative place in the field.

Transgender studies have had its own historical development. Once simply known as gender passing, the term "transgender" has gained significant popularity since the 1990s. It refers to people who live across the boundary of gender away from the gender they were born into. Typically if one has had sex reassignment surgery, the term utilized to describe his/her identity is "transsexual." This term can be traced back to sexology in the late nineteenth century. Transgender rights began in 1975, with towns and cities nationwide beginning to adopt trans protective ordinances. Discrimination of transgendered people is still very common, even by large gay rights organizations. Important writers in trans studies include Gayle Salamon, Susan Stryker, and Julia Serano.

Intersex studies focuses on the history of what was once called hermaphroditism and contemporary biomedical ethical issues. "Intersex" designates "a variety of congenital conditions in which a person has neither the standard male nor female anatomy," endocrinology, or chromosomes. Currently, intersex is considered a medically treatable condition by the general medical profession, and surgeries are often performed on infants. Many of these children grow up to have serious sexual dysfunction and experience significant gender dysphoria. Intersex activists advocated changes within the medical profession based on biomedical ethics. Alice Domurat Dreger's edited *Intersex in the Age of Ethics* is an excellent example of the genre.

## LGBTI Religious Literature and Queer Theology

Queer theology is an attempt to reread or simply read theologies – often Christian – as already having embedded within them or having possibility for containing a queer sensibility. Examples include reading sexual and gender ambiguity



into the trinity (e.g., Gavin D'Costa's essay "Queer Trinity"), the experience of queer love in the metanarrative of Jesus as God-made-flesh (Patrick Cheng's *Radical Love*), or the possible intersex identity of the body of Christ (Susannah Cornwell "Intersex and Ontology: A Response to The Church, Women Bishops and Provision").

LGBTI religious literature explores traditional issues within religious social and community life, or passages with sacred texts, and attempts to find reconciliation for excised persons defined as sexually deviant or rereads texts with greater acumen and/or more favorable social interpretations. This genre can also take the form of personal narrative. Kathy Rudy and Robert Goss have both written elegantly in the latter category. One can also do a very smart cultural reading of rhetorical gestures and ideological frames that have become contemporary politico-religious dialogue, such as Mark Jordan's *Recruiting Young Love*.

Queer theology and LGBTI religious literature are not particularly dependent on queer theory or LGBTI studies. It is clear that the history of religious thinking has had a strong impact on the well-being of LGBTI people and has influenced the motivations and perspectives for doing research on LGBTI identity and behaviors. This relationship could be rendered much more visible in secular and religious scholarship.

## **LGBTI Psychology: History and Contemporary Models**

Our modern intellectual history regarding homosexuality began in the late nineteenth century with sexology. Researchers such as Richard Von Krafft-Ebing and Dr. James Kiernan studied "perversions" and medically categorized deviants. Prior to sexology, the dominant sexual ideology privileged reproductive behavior as moral with all other types of behavior as immoral, a judgment strongly driven by religion. After the invention of homosexuality as an identity (coined in 1869 and reaching popular clinical usage by 1886) and the significant efforts of sexology to understand the contours of "deviant" sexuality, persons with opposite-sex sexual

desire – heterosexuals – began to be understood as the healthiest of citizens, the ones who are natural and worthy of moral and psychological respect. Sigmund Freud, in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, had a strong influence in this regard.

Up to the 1950s, the struggle over homosexual identity remained mired in questions of psychological and biological health. As positive critiques of sexuality began to be produced, the pathologizing efforts of sexology began to fade. The first major change in this thinking was the Kinsey model (1948), which developed sexuality theory along a 7-point scale – on one end falls the pure heterosexual, on the other the pure homosexual. Most individuals fall somewhere in between.

Stage models have been popular in the contemporary psychology of sexual orientation. Vivienne Cass (1979) is the most well known and uses six stages to explain gay identity development, which begins with confusion, develops through acceptance and pride, and ends in the synthesis of sexual identity into a larger understanding of self. Alan Dowds argues for a 3-stage model of gay male identity development: first shame, then compensation for shame, and finally authenticity.

Others have tried different kinds of frames. Anthony D'Augelli, for example, developed what he calls a "Lifespan Model" which he says is a fluid holistic lifelong process of identity development that involves five recognizable behaviors that are interwoven together and can occur at different and multiple times. Finally, there continues to be sex researchers who approach sexuality on a more complicated grid that mirrors the Kinsey approach. Fritz Klein, for example, used seven variables on grid to measure sexuality, all of which are superimposed on a time scale (past, present, future).

## **HIV/AIDS**

The role that the AIDS crisis and HIV have had on the psychology, community life, and scholarly importance of everything aforementioned cannot

be overestimated. The depth of the trauma of HIV/AIDS beginning in the early 1980s and its contemporary role in LGBTI communities have yet to be fully understood or integrated into our history, theory, and theology. It may be many years and generations before we can articulate the full impact. Important contributions to this discourse include Randy Shilts, Tim Dean, Castiglia and Reed, and the ACT-UP oral history project.

## Conclusion

One of the most exciting aspects of these overlapping fields of study that all anchor themselves in the lives of LGBTI and queer people around the globe and throughout history is that there is still a lot of knowledge to be produced by scholars and clinicians. Those interested in studying and writing about such topics should be strongly encouraged.

## See Also

- [Gender Roles](#)
- [Homosexuality](#)
- [LGBTQI Counseling](#)
- [Transgender and Gender Identity](#)

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## LGBTQI Counseling

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Counseling to address the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, or intersex (LGBTQI) individuals may have a variety of foci. In addition to the exploration of predictable developmental and interpersonal concerns, counseling with LGBTQI clients often addresses additional stressors or conflicts experienced uniquely by sexual minorities and their

families. These stresses may include coming out to family members, friends, or employers; health-related concerns such as conceiving or adopting children; assuring health benefits and legal rights for nonmarital partners; beginning or continuing a gender transition for transgender persons; responding to harassment or physical violence; conflicts with families of origin; workplace discrimination; and spiritual concerns. The stresses experienced by sexual minorities, including internalized homophobia and homonegativity, have been linked to often underdiagnosed symptoms of depression, suicidality, substance abuse, and sexually compulsive behavior.

Some clients seek counseling because they would like to change their sexual orientation or gender identity. Clients may experience pressure from parents, spouses, or other family members to conform to more traditional or culturally expected gender roles or sexual behaviors. Other clients seek counseling because they would like to live more openly and comfortably as a gay, lesbian, or bisexual person or to begin or continue a gender transition. Religiously committed sexual minorities may seek or be referred to counseling when their religious beliefs or faith community are not supportive of their sexual orientation or gender identity. These conflicts are particularly common among Evangelical Protestant Christians and Muslims, though these conflicts exist for clients of many faith traditions.

Of particular concern to mental health professionals is the question of whether or not sexual orientation and gender identity can be altered. That is, can a person whose primary emotional and erotic attraction is to members of the same sex (or both sexes) develop an exclusive or enhanced attraction to those of the other sex? Further, can a person who experiences an internal sense of disparity between her or his gender identity and biological sex develop a sense of congruence between identity and anatomy? At present, little evidence suggests that an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity may be significantly altered, though the choices that individuals make about sexual behaviors and adherence to social norms are often malleable. Thus, a gay or lesbian person may elect to

participate in heterosexual sexual activities (just as a heterosexually identified person may participate in sexual activities with those of the same sex), without experiencing a fundamental change in the direction of his or her primary emotional and erotic attraction. So, too, a person who is biologically male may choose to dress and conform to the expected gender role for his cultural group while internally experiencing the self as female. However, consistently acting in a way that is different from one's sexual orientation or gender identity often creates anxiety, stress, and depression for the individuals who attempt to do so. Several professional organizations, including the American Psychological Association and American Counseling Association, hold the position that same-sex sexual behavior and attraction are normal variants of human sexuality, and the change of one's sexual orientation is, therefore, not a supportable goal for therapy. However, some mental health practitioners believe that sexual orientation can be changed and offer services designed to facilitate change of sexual orientation (one form of which is known as "Reparative Therapy").

Many clients come from religious backgrounds which limit sexual expression to heterosexual (usually marital) relationships and expect gay, lesbian, or bisexually identified individuals to commit to exclusively heterosexual activity or to choose celibacy. Additionally, few religious traditions, with the exception of some Native American traditions, have been supportive of gender transitioning among adolescents or adults. Religious LGBTQI adults often feel pressured to reject their sexual orientation or gender identity or to leave their religious community if they would like to be "out." However, a growing number of religious communities and para-church organizations accept and support openly LGBTQI individuals without expecting heterosexual practices, celibacy, or gender conformity.

Many religiously committed sexual minorities have spent considerable time attempting to change their sexual orientation or gender identity. Clients often report intensive use of prayer and scripture reading in an effort to change what they view as sinful behavior. A small number of

Christian clients have pursued exorcism in an attempt to banish a “spirit of homosexuality.” Some clients have adopted an image of God which is condemning and rejecting, believing that God finds their sexual orientation or gender identity intolerable and requires change from them. Others adopt an image of God which is loving, but may wonder why God would allow them to suffer discrimination from others. A smaller number of clients adopt the idea that they are made in God’s image. Religiously committed clients may also make decisions about being “out” within their religious community and daily life. Some individuals are “out” everywhere, while others may be “out” in one setting, but not another. Many religiously committed sexual minorities feel that they must choose between their religious commitment and sexual orientation or gender identity, a choice which often creates a loss of at least one essential element of the person’s identity.

Counseling of LGBTQI clients, like counseling offered to other communities of clients, focuses first on the presenting concern of the client or client family. The clinician acknowledges that the client’s concerns may be related primarily to sexual orientation or gender identity, influenced partially by these factors, or have little to do with these aspects of identity. As an ethical practitioner, the counselor assesses whether or not she or he is competent to offer services to the client, negotiates treatment goals that are both consistent with the client’s values and supportable by research and professional practice standards, and makes referrals to allied professionals, as needed. The counseling may serve an individual client, a couple, or a larger family system. Counselors of many different sexual orientations and gender identities may be helpful to LGBTQI clients, often at different stages in the therapy process.

Counseling often focuses on the treatment of specific symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse; improving interpersonal relationships between partners or family members; choosing supportive relationships; reconciling religious beliefs with dimensions of identity; and grieving losses of beliefs, communities, relationships, behaviors, or imagined

futures (such as a heterosexual marriage, for some clients). Counseling may also focus on social justice and advocacy issues. Those who counsel LGBTQI individuals and families usually rely on established therapeutic modalities, including psychodynamic, cognitive, behavioral, humanistic, family, and systems approaches.

## See Also

- ▶ [Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Body and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Couples, Marriage, and Family Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Depression](#)
- ▶ [Faith Development Theory](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Gender Roles](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Homosexuality](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Prejudice](#)
- ▶ [Sin](#)
- ▶ [Transgender and Gender Identity](#)

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## Liberation Psychology

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Liberation psychology is an umbrella term for a cross-disciplinary movement in psychology

which originated in Central and South America as a response to grievous social injustice, civil war, and political turmoil. It is most often associated with the work of Jesuit priest and social psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró (1942–1989) in El Salvador. Although he is often credited with popularizing the term in social and community psychology, it was “coined” and employed independently by Nancy Caro Hollander in her assessment of the progressive social justice initiatives of psychoanalysts who integrated the psychological insights of Freud with the social and economic analysis of Marx.

Liberation psychology is a broad movement in psychology comprised of multiple schools with different cultural and ideological origins. It is perhaps most often associated with the work of Jesuit priest and social psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró (1942–1989) in El Salvador, who called for a psychology which relinquished its aspirations for social, political, and “scientific” prestige in order to make “a preferential option for the poor,” those people who are oppressed by unjust social conditions and political regimes. This liberation psychology entailed a fusion of liberation theology, the political analysis of psychology from critical psychology, Paulo Freire’s radical pedagogy, and the methodological tools of social psychology. The social ethics and theological assertions of liberation theology in particular were of great import in the development of Martín-Baró’s thinking, who maintained a close relationship with renown liberation theologian and philosopher Ignacio Ellacuría.

Three tenets of liberation theology crucial to Martín-Baró’s development of liberation psychology were the belief in a God of life and justice who scorned oppression, the importance of orthopraxis over orthodoxy, and the preferential option for the poor. Using these three principles Martín-Baró proposed three essential elements of liberation psychology: a new horizon by which psychology would not concern itself with maintaining a privileged political or social position but with employing itself in the service of the poor and oppressed, a new epistemology that attempts to understand psychological dynamics from the perspective of the dominated

poor Salvadorans instead of the perspective of the dominant elite, and a new praxis by which knowledge and research developed from the perspective of the oppressed then becomes used to empower them by developing critical consciousness regarding their psychosocial-political reality (*concientización*), in order that they may liberate themselves and change that reality. Given these elements, Martín-Baró outlined for liberation psychology three urgent tasks. Firstly, there needs to be a recovery of historical memory, by which one discovers those behaviors of the past which instill a sense of collective identity and help an oppressed community survive and struggle toward liberation. Secondly, there needs to be a de-ideologizing of everyday experience through the subversion of dominant narratives by psychologists participating in the life of the poor, recovering their experience and “returning” it to them, so that they may reflect upon it and form a broader consciousness of their reality. Thirdly, psychologists in El Salvador should shun the importation of ethics, cultures, and values alien to the country’s people and instead use the people’s own values and virtues as represented in the cultural, social, and religious institutions that have aided in their survival during the civil war and struggle toward social justice.

Using this liberation psychology, Martín-Baró developed social psychological research projects that aimed to understand phenomena as varied as the effects of war on mental health (especially that of children), the psychological dynamics of state terrorism and oppression, the ways that psychology can collude with or go against the status quo, the use of religion as an instrument of psychological warfare, and the experiences of the Salvadoran people in the midst of social and political violence. This research was not simply published in academic journals but was likewise used to develop critical consciousness (*concientización*) among the Salvadoran people. Due to the political implications of this perspective for psychology and Salvadoran society, Martín-Baró was murdered in 1989 along with seven others on the campus of the Central American University in San Salvador. His vision,



however, lives on as it has influenced many social and clinical psychologists in Latin America, North America, and Europe.

Parallel to the development of Martín-Baró's thinking, in 1981 the North American psychoanalyst Nancy Caro Hollander became interested in the work of Marie "Mimi" Langer (1910–1987) and other psychoanalysts in the Southern Cone countries (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil) who also struggled against unjust political regimes, by relating psychoanalysis and Marxism in both theory and clinical practice much in the same way that liberation theology had related theology and Marxism in liberatory reflection and praxis. Hollander worked with Marie Langer and her colleagues clinically and academically and, as a result of their relationship, subsequently began writing a group biography detailing their life and work in the midst of war and oppression. In that biography, it was detailed how Marie Langer and many of her colleagues had originally migrated from Europe to South America due to the growing threat of Nazism to Europe and toward their communist and Marxist political views. Much like their counterparts in North America, in South America Langer and other migrating psychoanalysts initially found it necessary to keep a low profile on their Marxist ideologies for fear of retribution from more conservative colleagues and the local right-wing governments.

As conditions in Latin America continued to deteriorate due to civil wars, revolutions, and economic-political oppression, psychoanalysts began to speak out against injustice and take steps to both make sense of the escalating conflicts psychoanalytically as well as develop treatment relevant to the needs of oppressed and displaced people, hence making a preferential option for the poor people of Latin America. Freud's theories concerning the intrapsychic dynamics of repression, splitting, and projection were related to Marx's theories regarding the repressive and alienating dynamics of economic and structural injustice. The function and role of an overly harsh and persecutory superego likewise became contextualized and related to the imposition of the bourgeoisie morality and

right-wing politics of the governing classes. The work of Melanie Klein in particular became very influential in understanding how human destructiveness was affected by interpersonal, economic, and societal dynamics, such as genocidal ideologies molding everyday poor people into soldiers for the all-good regime against the all-bad civilians or insurgents (in many cases seen as one and the same).

In clinical practice, social justice-oriented psychoanalysts in Latin America would contextualize developmental (oedipal, preoedipal) difficulties and mental illness in the historical economic and political oppression that their patients' experienced in society and through family life, providing interpretations that would encourage them to speak and give voice to their psychosocial trauma. Apart from individual treatment, Langer and others also practiced group psychotherapy as a liberating practice, providing a much more socially relevant service extending mental health services to wider communities in need of support. A variety of pragmatic methodologies were developed in relation to the social ambivalence that surrounded treatment with particular clients (whether it was working with a torturer, a victim of torture, or an insurgent), including encouraging patients to become politically active in order to give voice to their fears and anxieties, a move that was found to be clinically useful in helping the healing process, as well as inviting patients to work toward changing their social reality. Due to such consciousness raising and revolutionary clinical work, Hollander used the phrase liberation psychology to describe the labors of social justice-oriented psychoanalysts like Marie Langer, a use that was reinforced after she found that Martín-Baró had coined the phrase earlier to describe his social psychological work in El Salvador.

## Commentary

A liberation psychology of religion would be concerned with the ways that religion could be a force of prophetic and critical consciousness for social change or a tool of psychosocial

domination upholding the interests of those in power. In the specific case of El Salvador, Martín-Baró was concerned with a model of intervention the United States had developed known as “low-intensity conflict,” which emphasized sociopolitical psychological warfare which sought to “win the hearts and minds” of the people who supported the insurgency against the US-backed regime. It would pursue this goal through the use of propaganda, harassment, sanctions, and even torture to make people feel insecure about their basic beliefs and shift political orientation in favor of US interests in the region. Religion, as a central institution for many Salvadorans, enters the picture as one possible tool of such psychological manipulation.

In a series of studies starting in 1984, Martín-Baró and his colleagues did empirical research on the relationship between different types of religiosity and sociopolitical attitudes, which compared Catholic Christian Base Communities (groups that use the perspective of liberation theology to reflect upon their spiritual and material conditions in order to organize social justice efforts) to converts to Evangelical Pentecostalism and charismatic Catholics. These studies took place during a time in which North American evangelical churches intensified missionary efforts into the area, thanks in part to the support of conservative political groups in the USA. It was found that while the Catholic Christian Base Communities displayed a “horizontal” religiosity which emphasized God among the people working toward a more just society, the church as a prophetic voice in society, and the war in El Salvador as a result of structural injustice which must be responded to by a socially active church, evangelical Pentecostals and charismatic Catholics alike displayed a “vertical” religiosity which emphasized God as mysterious and distant and the church as a house of prayer apart from society, with the war a result of man’s sinfulness and divine will, which will end only by praying to God and asking for mercy. As a result of these respective theologies, “horizontal” religiosity tended to lead people from the Christian Base Communities to become conscious of their social conditions, to

organize and mobilize in the interest of social justice, and to have more progressive views on child-rearing, education, work, and politics, while “vertical” religiosity tended to legitimize the policies and behaviors of the government as inevitable and necessary, to become complacent and conforming to the status quo, and to have more conservative views on child-rearing, etc. Type of religiosity, then, was tied to sociopolitical attitudes which either maintained or brought into question the policies and ideologies of oppressive political regimes.

A more psychoanalytic approach to a liberation psychology of religion would attempt to correlate the effects of the different types of theologies and religiosity on the psyche and the way that particular religiosities organize the psyche are related to the economic and power structures of society. For example, one could take James W. Jones’s study of how religion can be both a source of terror and violence or revelation and transformation and relate that analysis to a social analysis of political power. If what Jones calls fanatical religion fosters deep psychological splits in the self between “good” and “bad,” with all the good projected onto an over-idealized God image and all the bad projected outside into groups designated as “other,” it carries the potential of infantilizing adherents before an awesome and magnanimous parental figure, rendering them submissive and unable of exercising critical thinking in relation to other idealized figures, such as the state, an ethnic group, patriarchy, or a nationalistic identity. The over-idealized social institution may then invoke such sentiments to maintain a particular social order and label those who would upset that social order as enemies who must be silenced or destroyed. Alternatively, Jones also refers to religion’s transformative capacity, its ability to create a space from which new insights and truths may emerge in new permutations of consciousness through a relationship – not of submission but of surrender – to a teacher, a text, an empathic community, or a spiritual practice. This transformative function may liberate the true self and allow space for a critical voice to develop which may be able to de-idealize and critically examine

the structures of power and politics within religion, culture, and society. This process may initially be deconstructive as one breaks down the over-idealization of God-images, the ethnic group, or the state, but may also become constructive as new idealizations and permutations of religious experience may emerge from within a de-idealized void. New conceptions of religion may arise with a prophetic vision of a more just society.

## See Also

- Christianity
- Communal and Personal Identity
- Cultural Psychology
- Liberation Theology
- Martín-Baró, Ignacio
- Poverty
- Psychology
- Psychology of Religion
- Psychotherapy
- Psychotherapy and Religion
- Religiosity
- Religious
- Religious Coping

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## Liberation Theology

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Liberation theology is a Christian theology that originated in the Latin American Catholic Church in the 1960s, but which can today can be found around the world in North America (e.g., Black Liberation Theology), Africa (e.g., African Women's Theology), and Asia (e.g., Minjung Theology). In Latin America it grew out of the efforts of Catholic priests who related theology to Karl Marx's theories of social analysis in order to become more socially conscious of the conditions of political and state oppression and to relate theological reflection about the nature of economic and social oppression to the needs of the Latin American poor for social justice. Considering God to be a God of justice and Jesus as not only the savior of mankind but the liberator of the oppressed, liberation theologians lived among the poor as an act of solidarity, making a preferential option for the poor and protesting the unjust conditions that afflicted them through political activism, community

work, and academics. Liberation theology has also been of interest to social justice-oriented mental healthcare workers, inspiring not only a variety of liberation psychologies (i.e., the work of Ignacio Martín-Baró, Mary Watkins, and Lawrence Alschuler) but also an integration of liberation theology and pastoral care (e.g., the work of Stephen Pattison).

## See Also

► [Liberation Psychology](#)

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## Libido

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*Libido* is a term used in psychoanalytic psychology to denote the fundamental sexual energy of the human organism, either a sexual “instinct” or “drive” which in simple terms compels us to reproduce the species. In Freud’s economic theory of the psyche, libido is proposed as the sexual source of all mental energy, which flows towards objects of our attention, thereby investing them with interest or *cathecting* those objects. In this way, libido establishes a psychic relationship with the object whether in fantasy or reality. The sublimation of libido into creative activity is the source of civilization for Freud, achieved through the complex processes of displacement of sexual energy away from the gratification of our individual desires, towards servicing the wider purposes of the social groups and institutions to which we belong.

Freud also described how libido cathects zones of the body during the early life of the child in phases called the oral, anal, and genital stages of development. These different stages evolve as the child’s awareness and interest are invested in progressively more complex activities focused on different parts of the body, beginning

with the mouth during feeding and then the anus during potty training, before moving onto the genitals, which continue to absorb more and more attention and interest into adulthood.

For Klein, however, her clinical work with children revealed that the development of these phases was not as staged as Freud proposed but that at any time from early life onwards, a mixture of these phases of interest could be observed, with some impulses prevailing over other impulses at different times, in order to defend the infant, child, and later adult against primitive anxieties of a sadistic nature. Hinshelwood writes:

...the sequence of dominance was the effect of the sadism, the fear of retaliation, and the anguished wish to restore damage. [...] She also thought of the genital phase as a particular upsurge of libidinal feelings, and that there may therefore be a precocious surge towards the genital phase as a reassurance against the sadistic impulses of the pre-genital phases (Hinshelwood 1989: 338–339).

In other words, the premature development of genitally focused sexual activity may indicate that deeper impulses of oral and anal aggression are being warded off by the child, out of a fear of retaliation for the harm the expression of these impulses might cause. For Klein, libido pervades all object relationships channelled through various erotogenic zones of the body at various levels of intensity from early life to death. Libido is depicted as something of a rapacious, greedy, and visceral force fundamental to the presence of life and its complex quest to sustain itself.

In the analytic psychology of Jung, however, the term “libido” is deployed to denote a more generic psychic energy or life force that propels the personality towards individuation through the enlargement of the “self.” For Jung, libido has a spiritual dimension which did not exist for Freud or Klein. In this way, Jung proposes that libidinal energy is invested in all forms of intentional activity, from individual developmental “tasks” such as symbolism and the acquisition of language to increasingly complex creative activities, including art, science, and religion, that aid increased psychological and spiritual

integration. Libido is depicted as a benevolent force which invests both subjectivity and the world around us with the intentional activity of life itself.

## See Also

- Freud, Sigmund
- Instinct
- Jung, Carl Gustav
- Psychoanalysis
- Psychology and the Origins of Religion
- Self Psychology
- Sex and Religion
- Sexuality and Religion: Feminist Views

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## Lilith

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Lilith is an ancient Near Eastern Goddess who reaches into ageless archetypal fears of the night, death, and the wild, untamed natural world. She shows herself in Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Canaanite, Persian, Hebrew, Arabic, and Teutonic mythology. She is known as a longhaired night demon, child-killing witch, succubus, wind-spirit, seductress, bloodsucker, Impure Female, End of Day, screech owl, or hag. In Hebrew mythology she was the first wife of Adam and the manifestation of the rejected

and disembodied shadow of the Great Goddess rejected by the monotheistic, patriarchal Hebrews (Koltuv 1986). Lilith lives in the wild and is close to nature – she is depicted as having hairy legs like a beast, sometimes winged with talons for feet, reminding us of the nocturnal wisdom of the bird Goddesses before her (Johnson 1988). She is a balancing force to the all-powerful solar God who is divorced from the earth's sensual nature. As with all ancient figures in mythology, she has gone through many incarnations. She has been used by the patriarchy to exemplify the punishment dealt out to any woman who is autonomous and awakened to their female sexual power. Jungians call her our unincorporated female *shadow* for she, and figures like her, becomes a basin for humanity to deposit our collective fears of the dark.

Lilith originated in Sumeria as the Great Assyrian Goddess Inanna's handmaiden. It is said that Lilith collected people from the fields to participate in sexual rites in the holy temple at Erech. These rituals belonged to the Goddess and were central to the culture of the time, initiating participants into the mysteries of Her ways. Inanna was primarily a lunar deity, and her mythologies were reflective of the phases of the moon. The importance of these cycles and their interpretations are central to understanding how people's consciousness was oriented at this time. The mysteries of life, death, and regeneration hung on the appearance and disappearance of this light in the night skies. In pre-patriarchal myths of Goddess, the moon's waxing was a symbol of Her ability to give life, balanced by the moon's waning, symbolizing Her inevitable cycle of death that followed. Death in this context was understood as a necessity, for life is predicated on death. This life-giving and life-taking cycle of the moon is mirrored in the earth's seasons of summer abundance and winter dormancy. Around the world, like Kali in India, the Goddess was whole, dark and light, a reflection of life in the big picture (Baring and Cashford 1993).

The Babylonian hero Gilgamesh and his solar ways eventually drove Inanna and Lilith apart. Lilith appears as a demon living in the *huppu* tree that Inanna cared for. Inanna was to make her



bed and throne out of it, but when she visits the tree, it is filled with frightful beings: the demon Lilith, a serpent, and a bird, all images of female power. Gilgamesh cuts down the *huppulu* tree with his sword of masculine rational thought and aggressiveness, forcing Lilith to destroy her home and flee into the “wild, uninhabited places” (Gadon 1989). This myth prepares for the dismantling of powerful, autonomous, self-seeding Goddesses such as Inanna and for the future demonization of Lilith by patriarchal religions (Gadon 1989).

In the Jewish *Zohar*, a Kabbalistic work of the thirteenth century, there is an origin myth of Lilith’s that depicts how God diminished the moon’s importance to being primarily a reflection of the sun’s luminosity. Similarly:

God thereupon said to her, ‘Go and diminish thyself.’ . . . Thereupon she diminished herself to be head of the lower ranks. From that time on she had no light of her own, but derives her light from the sun. At first they were on an equality, but afterwards she diminishes herself . . . she reduces her status and her light, and shells upon shells were created for covering the brain . . . After the primordial light was withdrawn there was created a ‘membrane for the marrow,’ a *k’lifah* husk or shell, and this *k’lifah* expanded and produced another who was Lilith (*Zohar* I 19b, as cited in Koltuv 1986).

This is an obvious psychological repression and symbolic split of the organizational powers of the universe – a formal indoctrination of a dual system where the solar male God and his rationality are posited as psychologically and politically superior to the lunar female Goddess, and her twilight mystery Lilith is born from this split, deriving “her energetic force from opposition and suppression” (Koltuv 1986). However, the text goes on to explain the importance of these images in the process of truly understanding the “radiance that cannot be comprehended” (*Zohar* I 19b, as cited in Koltuv 1986), as if these are protective layers of the rationalist ego that can help patriarchal monotheists along the path of self-realization. The solar patriarchal Jewish consciousness suppressed and demonized shadow goddesses, such as Lilith, in a centuries-long effort to elevate the monotheistic Hebrew

Yahweh to absolute goodness, separate from all earthly processes and darkness.

Creation stories of Lilith as the first wife of Adam tell how God “took filth and impure sediments from the earth, and out of these he formed female. As was to be expected, this creature turned out to be an evil spirit” (Patai as cited by Baring and Cashford 1993). Lilith refuses to lie beneath Adam submissively during sexual intercourse, demanding that they are on equal footing since they are both made from earth. Adam rejects her. But rather than conform, Lilith speaks the unutterable name of god and flies off into the far reaches of the desert “to a cave on the shores of the Red Sea” (Alpha Beta Ben Sira, as cited by Koltuv 1986). Rather than hand over her sovereignty, Lilith chooses dominion for herself, defying patriarchal law and forging her own path in the desolate wilderness. She is the wild spirit of nature within us that cannot be tamed. She refuses to be bound in relationship that will only relegate her to whipping post for Adam and Yahweh’s hatred of her regenerative sexual wisdom. Lilith teaches us that isolation and peripheral living is a necessity in finding out who we are. Lilith teaches us how to find our way through the dark. Psychologically, she brings to consciousness more meaning than the moralistic solar divinities that suppress natural forces. As Jung taught, there is gold in the shadow that we ignore at our peril. Today, we are seeing the return of the repressed in feminism, depth psychology, and ecology – urgently needed expansions of collective consciousness.

Once cast out of the Garden, Lilith becomes the night demon who will give men and women erotic dreams. It is said that one should not sleep alone, for fear of Lilith appearing in the night, arousing our suppressed sexual longings. Lilith is a gateway for our sexual autonomy and represents the uroboric wholeness that is in direct opposition to the concept of monogamy that monotheism instated. She is depicted as a psychological shadow in patriarchal moralistic repression – a semen-stealing witch who uses the spilled seeds of men from their sexual dreams to spawn 100 demon babies each night (Johnson 1988).

Lilith is a powerful indestructible force that not even God can remove. After she flees Adam, she reappears as the snake that tempts Eve with the apple from the tree of Knowledge. In art it is often depicted as a serpent with the head of a woman or a woman with the tail of the serpent (Baring and Cashford 1993). Lilith and Eve are inextricably linked, for they are two sides of the same Great Goddess, and she will not let her sister remain innocent in the Garden. Like Persephone eating the pomegranate seed from the underworld, Eve too must taste the scope of life and assimilate knowledge, like an innocent child that must inevitably grow up psychologically and know complex adult consciousness, including sexuality.

In stark contrast to Eve, the mother of all creation, Lilith is portrayed by patriarchal myths as a child killer to be warded off by charms and amulets (Koltuv 1986). It could be said that collective rejection of Lilith is activated, surfacing in the minds of some women who experience postpartum depression, having fantasies of abandoning or harming their children – for someone must feel the repressed collective fears. Myths of Lilith as baby killer and strangler are a distortion of her energy, but the imagery also informs women that in the search for our individuation, we must release the infantile desire to be loved by everyone, to be adored and accepted. When we identify only with Eve, only with the sweet, docile, wife, and mother, then Lilith will eventually erupt unconsciously within us. We can see this enacted through the modern-day experience of PMS. When women bleed every month, there is an opening to get in touch with our inner Lilith. Many women are repelled by their own bodily and psychological shadows, and, instead of using these experiences as a point of transformation, such women are encouraged by patriarchy to be ashamed of the fluctuations of our bodies. But getting past this, as in psychotherapy or feminist circles, can bring a deeper knowledge of feminine wholeness in the gift of life-giving, too long hidden in shadow. Perhaps, when we are broken down physically just enough to feel our own desires to flee and be in solitude or seek

help – perhaps this is the only time Lilith is allowed to reveal herself.

To speak of Lilith is akin to trying to capture the wind, for often she flees from our voice, our mind goes blank. She has been so long repressed and demonized that she does not want to be pinned down or even understood. Our inner Lilith needs to have a say, a voice, or she will shriek at us or through us, like the screech owl she is named after. Lilith is the part of our nature that needs to be wild, untamed, sexually animated, whole, and natural.

## See Also

- ▶ [Adam and Eve](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Ashtoreth](#)
- ▶ [Body and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Demons](#)
- ▶ [Fall, The](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Inanna/Ishtar](#)
- ▶ [Kali](#)
- ▶ [Original Sin](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and Judaism](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and Wicca](#)
- ▶ [Women in Judaism](#)
- ▶ [Yahweh](#)

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## Liminality

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## Origin

Liminality is a term used to describe the psychological process of transitioning across boundaries and borders. The term “limen” comes from the Latin for threshold; it is literally the threshold separating one space from another. It is the place in the wall where people move from one room to another. Often a door is placed across the threshold to close up and restrict access between rooms. The concept was first applied to psychology as the technical name for the perceptual threshold, the degree of stimulus intensity that would just be noticed as audible or visible or detectable in any sensory mode. But its contemporary usage comes from the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1873–1957). In his study of religion as a cultural artifact, he saw that many, if not all, of the rituals across cultures have the function of moving a person from one status or social circumstance to another. His major work, *Rites of Passage* or *Les Rites du Passage* in the original French (1909/1960), sets out the thesis that at a psychological and cultural level, religion and its rituals give us the means by which we cope with change, whether it be from childhood into adulthood, from single to married, and from lay to clerical, and to mourn the loss of a beloved as they transition from this world to whatever lies beyond. His student Victor Turner (1920–1983) expanded upon van Gennep’s analytic framework and integrated it into role theory and the relationship of social action to drama.

## Psychological Liminality

As a psychological capacity, liminality is the ability to bridge between self and the other. At an interpersonal level, this is called empathy. We come to know the other by entering into their phenomenological space to some degree. We begin to see things from their perspective. At the level of social groups, it can be described as the capacity for moving toward an insider’s perspective. Pike (1954) coined the terms “emic” and “etic” to refer to the insider’s and outsider’s perspectives with respect to language, and this now has been broadly adopted in cross-cultural psychology for the knowledge of any social group. So liminality with respect to social groups is gaining the knowledge that approaches what an insider would have; we bridge the gap between our own groups and those of the other. Both the interpersonal and the group levels of liminality require us to see and appreciate the other and to find bridges that would allow harmonious relationships as opposed to conflict. Liminality, therefore, is a requirement for any effective interpersonal or intercultural communication.

At the intrapsychic level, liminality is the capacity to move within and between the boundaries of one’s psychological structure. Lewin (1936/1966) first used the metaphor of space in his topological psychology, defining life spaces and discussing the relative permeability of the boundaries between areas of the person’s experiential world. At one extreme, one has the rigid compartmentalization characteristic of dissociation and multiple personalities; at the other is the failure of boundaries found in borderline personality disorders and termed “confluence” in Gestalt therapy.

In a spiritual sense, liminality is traveling between the world of spirit and the mundane world. This is the path of the shaman both in historical and current traditions. The shaman mediates between the two realms of being in service of the person seeking healing in the mundane realm. Modern shamanic approaches to healing also use this liminal skill of travelling between the worlds as a means of connecting the spiritual to the psychological.

Joseph Campbell's (1949) *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* was much influenced by van Gennep's basic outline of the threefold structure of liminal processes: preliminary, liminaire, and postliminaire. He took the concept and applied it to the transitional phases between the beginning and the end of a journey or transformational process. Liminality is the process of going in between two states and the time spent in that transitional zone when one is neither one nor the other but in the process of becoming. Liminality is the journey of transformation.

Finally, the therapeutic process is itself a literal rite of passage. We can view the relationship of therapist and client as a process of helping the client move from a state of unhappiness to some greater degree of either internal peace or interpersonal harmony and adjustment. The role of patient arises out of the medical role, part of a complementary pair, physician and patient. The various sessions within the relationship, whether in brief therapy or long-term dynamic work, are each small steps in the ritual of healing. Liminality describes any process of transformation from one state of being to another in human society; it is a key psychological concept.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Campbell, Joseph](#)
- ▶ [Rites of Passage](#)

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## Lived Theology

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Lived theology is a phrase that describes a process more than an academic discipline. Our lived theology is the enactment of that, which is most significant to us at any given moment and as lived out in our everyday existence, rather than the systemization of creedal propositions of any given faith tradition. Borrowing from the thought of both the philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) and the theologian Paul Tillich (1886–1965), and others who have furthered their thought, such as Langdon Gilkey (1919–2004), one's lived theology is one's "enactment of significance" in the world.

Theology, or speech about the divine, is traditionally seen as an academic discipline in which authoritative sources are interpreted and subsequently inform various doctrines and practices respective to one's religious tradition. Lived theology is phenomenological in nature, and is aligned with existential, empirical, and phenomenological traditions that view the divine as an experiential phenomenon. The divine is not considered as an *object* of experience, but a *quality* of experience related to living out significance in the world, a living out of what matters most to one in any given situation. In this way, lived theology is not an exclusive property of elite academicians, but an existential of every human being. Hence, if human beings enact significance in every moment of their lives and if we understand *lived* theology as those enactments of significance, we can conclude, therefore, that to be a human being *is* to be a theologian. The human being is *homo theologicus* (DuBose 2000).

To be alive is to enact significance. Theological discernment from this perspective views how one is comporting oneself in one's everydayness as disclosing what Tillich called one's "ultimate concern" (Tillich 1952). These ultimate concerns, or as I call them enactments of

significance, are not cognitively “thought out” propositions described in abstract, traditional religious discourse, but chosen ways of being-in-the-world. Agency inherent in comportment is lived out long before thought about. Such comportments are “prereflective,” as Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) argued (Merleau-Ponty 1964). This perspective privileges a different knowing prior to cognitive reconsideration.

Given these premises, enactments of significance are known only after the fact or only when reflecting on comportment as it is in operation or having just passed. Life is lived rather than objectified, as the French radical phenomenologist, Michel Henry (1922–2002), proposed (Henry 2002a). Moreover, when enactments are translated into conceptualizations, such as when an experience of the numinous is translated as “an encounter with the Holy Spirit,” the product of the translation is merely a “representation” of the experience and not the experience itself. Lived theology is not reflection on “that which is over there,” but a living out of significance rather than a living in relation to a representation of that experience.

Lived theology further presumes that if we are inherently theological, then our very nature as human beings is formed and led by what is of ultimate concern in our lives. Viktor Frankl’s (1905–1997) logotherapy is likened to this perspective in the conviction that meaning lures and constructs human development (1946/1997). We live and intend toward meaningful and fulfilling projects and relationships in life. Our enactments of significance, and, hence, any lived theology, are naturally transcendent seeking but delimited by one’s unalterable finitude, facticity, contingency, and “thrownness,” to use phraseology from Martin Heidegger (Heidegger 1962). The very delimitation of one’s “thrownness” enframes the meaningful possibilities of significance enacted in each moment and is free to change as significance shifts.

## Commentary

A word about therapeutic care for, and as, lived theology is in order. Therapeutic practice based

on this model begins and ends with attunement toward enactments of significance in particular life-world comportments. It then explores constrictions, that is, how one’s enactments of significance are restrained, inhibited, or confined. Finally, it has as the therapeutic goal, a free and authentic living into one’s cleared and lightened possibilities within one’s embraced limitations. All symptoms of the suffering soul are constricted enactments of significance and related to the inextricable interplay of death, transcendence, and radical subjectivity and are always and already lived out in equiprimordial ways. An obvious alignment with Daseinsanalytic phenomenology and practice is clear (Boss 1979; Heidegger 2001).

Often, discussants of this issue quibble about whether one considers oneself religious, spiritual, or theological. I choose to use the word “theology,” rather than “spirituality” or “religion,” because I believe the latter two concepts are less personal and too amorphous to disclose the specificity of one’s very particular enactments of significance in the world. Moreover, one’s comportment in existence discloses what one considers significant with much more veracity than what one verbalizes as significant. If you want to know someone’s theology, look at their enactments of significance *in the world*. At no time are we absent from living out enacted significance, even (and especially) in despair. Paraphrasing once again Tillich’s argument that doubt shows the significance of faith (Tillich 1957), I say that despair is an enacted significance *of lost significance*, which is perhaps the greatest of all therapeutic challenges.

## See Also

- Daseinsanalysis
- Existential Psychotherapy
- Faith
- Frankl, Viktor
- Heidegger, Martin
- Hermeneutics
- Homo Religiosus
- Kierkegaard, Søren
- Meaning of Human Existence
- Phenomenological Psychology

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## Locus of Control

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The Locus of Control (LOC) of reinforcement construct was originally developed by Rotter (1954, 1966) within the framework of his Social

Learning Theory, along a unidimensional internal-external continuum. An important elaboration by Levenson (1981) divided the external contingencies into separate “powerful others” and “chance” dimensions. Broadly, the LOC construct measures the degree to which people believe that reinforcements (rewards and punishments) from the environment are contingent on their own efforts, actions, and personal decisions (internal LOC) on the one hand versus luck, fate, external circumstance, and powerful others (external LOC) on the other. A more internal LOC is generally positively associated with a range of indices of psychological and physical health. It is argued that many of these positive health effects reflect the adoption of more positive coping strategies in such individuals. Conversely, externality is typically associated with negative coping styles and poorer physical and mental health outcomes.

In some LOC scales (e.g., the religious revision of Rotter’s internal-external scale), the external “powerful others” set of contingencies includes reference to a deity. Thus, the individual believes that, to some degree, the circumstances of their life are controlled by a god, goddess, or other spiritual forces. The belief that an external deity may be controlling some contingencies in a person’s life suggests a type of external (powerful other) LOC and might be expected to be associated with generally poorer health outcomes according to secular LOC theory. Certainly Sigmund Freud and Albert Ellis characterized religious belief in terms of defensive functioning and psychopathology, whereas Carl Jung and Gordon Allport suggested that religion may have important psychological functions and produce positive effects on mental health.

Contemporary scientific literature would suggest that degree of religiosity is positively (albeit mildly) associated with better mental health outcomes, in particular where the type of religiosity is “intrinsic” versus “extrinsic” according to Allport’s (1961) taxonomy. It has also been suggested that a person’s dispositional “spiritual/religious coping style” will influence how they respond to stressors and challenges and, in a sense, specifies the nature of the control



relationship they share with their god. In a self-directing style, a person functions in an active manner, independent of god (essentially a form of internal LOC). When a person adopts a deferring style, they will take a more passive role and wait for god to resolve a situation (thus adopting an external LOC). In a collaborative style, the person engages with their god in a mutual problem-solving process (mixed internal-external LOC). A surrendering style involves an active decision to release personal control over circumstances beyond personal control to god (external LOC). Depending on the situation, a collaborative style is generally associated with more positive mental health outcomes, although it has been argued that even the surrendering style can provide relief, comfort, and security in highly stressful situations. No matter which spiritual/religious coping style is adopted, it is also certainly the case that the use of prayer, ritual, and observance can instill an element of control into one's relationship with god.

## See Also

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- Jung, Carl Gustav

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## Locutions

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Locutions are inner experiences of hearing a divine voice or receiving revelation. The broader category is theophany or epiphany, which means any revelation or manifestation to humans by God or the divine or their agents such as angels. Visions, or apparitions, are epiphanies which are primarily visual, while locutions are the auditory aspect of contact with or from an external transcendent source. The experience can range from very realistic dialog with an angel (including an apparition) to a subtle and sudden feeling of inspiration coming in linguistic form. It is not uncommon for these visitations to be accompanied by other sorts of miracles, such as healing. St. Teresa of Avila is one of the classic examples of a mystic whose experience included locutions. Bernadette Soubirous (1844–1879) was a young French woman who also received locutions attributed to Our Lady of Lourdes. The Virgin Mary in both Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican traditions is a frequent source of apparitions and locutions. The Roman Catholic Church has a fairly detailed procedure devised over many years for checking the bona fides of claims for visions or locutions. Less clear cut examples can be found in the frequent use by mystics of the metaphor of the small “inner voice” that guides their spiritual growth and becomes a central part of their experience of the Divine. An example would be George Fox (1624–1691), the founder of the Society of

Friends, of Quakers, who reported hearing a voice that guided him in resolving spiritual conflicts. These inner voices often are heard during a period of quiet meditation or contemplation so as to still the external senses allow one to open up to the Divine.

## See Also

- [Hierophany](#)
- [Miracles](#)
- [Virgin Mary](#)

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## Logos

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## Earliest Use of Term

Logos, a noun, derives from the Greek verb *legein*, originally *to count*, later *to give an account*, finally as *lego*, *to say*. It enjoys an array of nuanced translations: *utterance, word, speech, thought, meaning, reason, argument, ratio, measure, standard, or principle*. Yet whatever distinctions exist among thinkers who employ the term, Logos is consistently used to denote something about creative unifying forces or functions in the composition of reality – cosmologic, religious, philosophical, or psychological.

As a concept, Logos is first encountered in the fragments of Heraclitus of Ephesus (ca. 500 BCE), where it identifies the underlying ordering principle or plan of the universe, which is itself

a hidden unity of opposites in tension. The Logos is not the source of creation, but rather the way in which creation operates, the flux in which “diversity comes out of unity and unity out of diversity” [Frag 10]. Although all creation is elemental of the “One,” humanity must “listen” for the Logos in order to comprehend it.

Platonic and Aristotelian use of the term was largely confined to the fact and consequences of human reason. Stoicism, however, took the term beyond the limits of philosophy. Heraclitus’ Logos became equated with a dynamic divine reason. Here, humanity did not merely participate in Logos, but was infused with it: Discourse, meaning-making, and life in accord with natural law – or the order given the cosmos by an all-virtuous God/Logos – were products of a “seed” or “ratio” of divinity within each human being.

## As Divine in Judeo-Christian Tradition

The divine character of Logos underwent subtle but profound change, when Jewish and Greek thought converged in the works of Philo of Alexandria (30 BCE–50 CE), who enlisted the term to place Torah on equal footing with Greek philosophy. Adapting Jewish Wisdom speculation – and often using “word” and “wisdom” interchangeably – Logos became both the intelligible world in the mind of God, after which the created world was modeled, and the agency by which it was actually made. By Hellenizing notions found in Jewish texts, canonical (e.g., Proverbs 8:22) and apocryphal (e.g., Wis. 7:22 and 9:1), Philo made the Logos a virtual hypostasis of God, His “Firstborn Son,” and “Image.”

Philo’s syncretism had arisen in an environment that also sustained popular belief in Apollo (especially surnamed Loxias, *fr. legein*) as the “spokesman” of his father Zeus. Thus, it was a short step to dubbing Jesus the Logos and Son of God – which the prologue to the Gospel. According to St. John (1:1–18) did near the beginning of the second century. Where St. Paul had declared Jesus Christ the one “through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (I Corinthians 8:6), the Johannine authors

(adapting a Wisdom hymn) trumpeted that the creative Word of God became flesh and entered the world it had created; no less, it “was God.”

Early Christian writers would employ Logos broadly and idiosyncratically: Justin Martyr followed a Philonic impulse in his *Apologies* (ca. 55 CE) to liken Christianity to stoic and platonic philosophies; Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215) even identified the eternal Christ/Logos as the giver of philosophy to the Greeks; and Christian Gnostics had at least three different notions of Logos – all disdaining the occurrence of actual incarnation. Significantly, Origen (ca. 182–254) saw Logos as a kind of effluence of God’s creativity, truth, and wisdom. It could be called God’s “Firstborn Son,” but in fact it was not only uncreated but coeternal (“there was no *when* it was not”). Moreover, Jesus was not really an incarnation of the Son, but rather a sinless human being who followed the Logos so closely as to be indistinguishable from it. This set the stage for the great Trinitarian and creedal debates of the next two centuries. In the end, Logos language was replaced by the term “Son.”

## Logos and Other Traditions

Development of the Logos concept continued into late antiquity: Hermetics declared that the “lightgiving word who comes from [God’s] mind is the son of God” (Copenhaver 1992, p. 2); Plotinus (205–270 CE) deemed Logos to be a divine entity of creation, unity, and order, but denied it rationality, since reasoning-out should be unnecessary to the mind of God in which all is immediate intelligibility; and the Jewish Wisdom tradition grew to identify the whole of Torah with the plan by which God created the world (Midrash Rabbah).

While one cannot argue a hereditary relationship between Logos and eastern religious thought, Logos is sometimes likened to the ultimate principle of Self in Buddhism, and the Way of Taoism. As the second person of the Christian Trinity, Logos has also been compared to the second facet of the Hindu formula *sac-cid-ananda* or Being-Awareness-Bliss.

## Logos and Depth Psychology

Modern depth psychologists have adapted Logos in a range of ways. Freud makes the most limited use, ironically calling Logos the “god” of his argument for rational acceptance of reality against the illusion(s) of religion. Analytical Psychology often equates Logos with the Self, archetype of psychic wholeness and unity of all opposites. The most noteworthy application of the term may be that of Viktor Frankl. Based on his own experience and observation of fellow concentration-camp survivors, his Logotherapy speaks to a meaning-seeking will at the center of human existence. In even the worst objective circumstances, he contends one has freedom as well a “responsibility” to seek transformative subjective meaning. It is exercise of this will that defines an authentic life.

## See Also

- Analytical Psychology
- Archetype
- Buddhism
- Christ
- Christianity
- Freud, Sigmund
- Gnosticism
- Jesus
- Self
- Taoism

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## Logotherapy

► Frankl, Viktor

## Loki

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Loki is the trickster in ancient Norse mythology – Scandinavia's Viking traditions. His legends were preserved by the ninth- and tenth-century *skalds* (bards) (Fig. 1). The early main surviving texts are the Icelandic *Eddas*. Loki is a crafty, seductive, paradoxical, and malicious/heroic trickster among the gods. He can assume different shapes (e.g., fire, horse, or falcon). His literature is a compilation of many free-wheeling themes. We find no tidy well-crafted novel with a clear plot here. Psychologically, Loki's myths express the multifaceted contents of the Norse collective unconscious. Any culture's collective unconscious can easily behave like a rowdy trickster, appearing inwardly or outwardly, shifting shapes, in diverse, baffling, dreamy images, rituals, and narratives. For the Norse, Loki can be a trickster of the big, tough hard-drinking macho warriors, or a distracting, seductive mare who gives birth to an eight-legged horse. He was an archetypal handsome rascal, attentive to the goddesses, who rarely resisted him. He sometimes worked to help the gods but often worked to undermine them and eventually to bring about their downfall in the "Twilight of the Gods." His tradition may have absorbed some elements of the Christian Devil. But whereas Christian faith affirms the dominance of God over the Devil, the Nordic shadowy powers were apparently archetypally stronger than the Christian Devil, so the myths express a cloud of doom about their demise (unless the "Twilight" is a late addition).



**Loki, Fig. 1** From Icelandic manuscript SAM 66. 18th century Norse. Iceland: Arni Magnusson Institute. Public Domain. (Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Processed\\_SAM\\_loki.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Processed_SAM_loki.jpg))

Loki was early on imagined as a fire demon. In Norway, when the fire was sparking, people would say that Loki was thrashing his children, suggesting a threat of punishment to children (Tonnelat 1959, p. 266).

Once Loki was trapped by the giant Geirrod who made him promise to deliver the mighty Thor to him without his magical hammer, iron gloves, and belt that made him invincible. Loki deceptively managed to get Thor to agree. But on the way to Geirrod's castle, they met Thor's devoted lover the goddess Grid. She was suspicious and loaned him her instruments of invincibility – gloves, girdle, and magic wand. With these he managed to escape Geirrod's vicious traps and avoid Loki's deception.

The Nordic apples of everlasting youth essential to the gods were guarded by the goddess Idun. Once, when Loki got into a scrape, he had to promise to his captor the giant Thjazi, in eagle form, that he would deliver to him the goddess Idun and her magic apples. So he lured Idun into

the forest under false pretenses, and she was captured by the nasty Thjazi and dragged away. So the gods of Aesir began to grow old, deprived of their magical apples, and they were furious with Loki. They forced him to go and retrieve Idun. So he took the form of a hawk, flew to the kingdom of the giants, and turned dear Idun into a nut and flew back with her in his beak. The angry giant turned himself into an eagle and chased Loki, but thanks to a huge fire built by the gods, his wings were burned and he fell to his death.

Here, the shadow trickster turns from harming the gods to helping them; this echoes Jung's insight that there is a treasure to be found in the shadow and that the inner divine Self regulates conflicts between archetypal instincts.

Loki was at his tricks again when he cut short the tresses of Thor's wife Sif. Angry Thor grabbed Loki and began breaking bones, until Loki begged for mercy. He promised to have the dwarves make Sif's hair of pure gold that would grow like regular hair. Loki hustled over to the forges of the dwarves, sons of Ivaldir. Easy, they said, and offered to make not only Sif's golden tresses but also two gifts for Odin: a magical ship, *Skidbladnir*, that would sail on its own accord and a spear, *Gungnir*, that would never stop until it hit its target. The rascal Loki is forced by the Self figure Thor to call on the craftsmen for help. The dwarves, diminutive but skilled, provided treasured golden hair to fulfill the dreams of every dreamy high-maintenance goddess, effortless energy for every hard-working sailor to move psyche's dramas along, and a satisfying phallic spear for the king of the gods. Loki bet two competitive dwarves that they could not outdo their brothers, but they came up with the magical golden ring *Draupnir*, which would make its owner constantly richer, and Thor's thundering hammer (Tonnelat 1959, p. 267). The golden ring continued its captivating power in English folklore and literature, since what greedy ego can resist the illusion of endless wealth? The thundering hammer will never lose its lightning ability to ram home the nails.

In Asgard, the land of the gods, Thor, the god of thunder and hammer, was once tricked by Loki



when he was challenged to drink a huge horn of beer that turned out to be magically never emptied. Then he was called on to wrestle with an old woman, but for all his strength, he could not move her – rather she forced him to his knees. It turned out that the horn had its tip in the sea, and the old woman was Old Age, who defeats all. The bragging drinkers and the powerful fighters can be overcome by a trickster, who reveals clever skill and fate’s archetypal inevitabilities (Davidson 1969, pp. 66–67).

The construction of a defensive wall around their Midgard was contracted out to a giant Jotunn, who had a giant stallion who could pull a huge load of rocks. But as pay the gods had to promise him the sun, the moon, and the love goddess Freya. But it had to be done by a strict deadline. The gods thought that he could never complete it on time, so they would not have to pay so dearly. But he showed them and moved ahead of schedule. So Loki went into action and turned himself into a mare who flicked her cute tail at the stallion, who then chased her into the woods for a 3-day tryst. This prevented the wall’s completion on time. Then Loki as the mare gave birth to an eight-legged stallion, Sleipnir. Here, the beastly giant helps the psyche build its inevitable defenses, seemingly at no cost. So Loki’s gender-shifting, shape-shifting transformation generates a frisky tryst that creates a magically high-energy beast, the envy of every hard-riding heroic ego. For a male to transform into a female and give birth would shame his manhood in Nordic society (Von Schnurbein 2000), but Loki is a trickster, and they do that, perhaps to mock the norm.

In a comic twist, the god of thunder Thor’s hammer had been stolen and had to be retrieved to protect the gods. Loki found out that the thief Thrym demanded that the gods send him their goddess of love Freya to be his bride. But a clever ruse was hatched. Thor dressed as Freya, leader of the Valkyries, and Loki as his handmaiden. Again, for a man to dress as a woman would threaten his masculinity in Nordic society, so this must have caused considerable laughter (Von Schnurbein 2000, p. 120). Though suspicious of the bride’s huge appetite,

the giants proceeded with the ceremony and placed Thor’s hammer on the “bride’s” lap. When Thor got his hands on the hammer, he killed the giants. Gender-bending disguises are a favorite of many trickster dramatists, such as Dionysus and Aristophanes, and the hammer in the lap of the goddess of love is a surefire way to tickle the audience, as psyche’s trickster knows.

Loki’s amorous adventures were many. God of fire, he seduced the goddess Glut (Glowing), who bore two daughters: Einmyria (Embers) and Eisa (Ashes). Next he charmed Angrboda, a giantess who gave birth to Fenrir the Giant Wolf, Jormungand the evil Earth-encircling Serpent with his tail in his mouth (a life-death *uroboros*), and Hel the Underworld Goddess. Many archetypal tricksters, in world mythology, like Kokopelli in Southwestern Native American tradition, also seduce the girls and cause trouble. Imagine that!

Loki’s most deadly feat involved Balder, whose mother had tried to make him invulnerable by extracting pledges from all the plants, trees, and metals to not harm him. The gods at banquets would hurl weapons at Balder for sport, yet they could not harm him. But Loki discovered a plant that she missed: mistletoe. So Loki made a dart with mistletoe and gave it to Balder’s brother Hoder, who threw the little spear at him and Balder fell down dead, to everyone’s astonishment. The gods grieved and held a great funeral on his ship with his wife and horse set afire, sending them to the land of the dead, ruled by ruthless Hel. So be not proudly inflated, ye gods, for even the greatest strong warrior or god can fall to a tiny trickery, says Loki. Tricks have always been among fighters’ weapons. This scene suggests to some scholars that Balder is a Christ image, and Loki then becomes the Christian Devil, in the theory that Christianity influenced Nordic myth (Von Schnurbein 2000, p. 124).

As the Nordic myths lumber toward their tragic end, a banquet scene displays Loki’s way of ripping off masks of dignity by exposing everyone’s shadow behavior. A dwarf Brokk had angrily sewn up Loki’s lips to stop his nasty talk, but Loki soon tore out the thread. The shadow is repressed, but not for long. His love



of intrigue and betrayal led to his insulting all the gods of Asgard. So he was not invited to Ægir's big feast where only Thor was absent. But he slipped his sneaky way into the crowd by pretending humility and friendship. But Bragi, whose duty it was to welcome guests, refused to welcome Loki, so when Loki raised a cup to the health of each god and goddess, he avoided mention of Bragi, who began to apologize. But Loki turned on him and accused him of cowardice in verbal combat. Loki turned up the heat and reminded every god of his scandalous mistakes. He accused every goddess present of unfaithfulness to their husbands. He savagely boasted of his affairs with most of them. Odin struggled to stop the mounting mockery. Idun, wife of Thor, offered him a cup of mead and urged him to calm down. But Loki would not stop. He lashed out at her, bragging that he had held her in his arms and that she loved it. At that climactic moment, Thor thundered in the hall to raise his deadly hammer over Loki's foolish head. Loki pretended to submit and headed toward the exit. But he let loose with a final threat of doom. Not only would there never be another banquet like this, but this hall would soon be destroyed by fire. Loki's final insult was to announce that the end of the world was about to come. They would all perish in an apocalyptic fire that would be the Twilight of the Gods. Loki the shadow betrayer, cynical trickster, overwhelms the psyche's personas of honor and dignity with his ruthless attacks and unrestrained malice. Sounds like a trickster-loaded political or military battle.

Loki is sometimes pictured tied to a rock with a venomous serpent dripping poison onto him, much like the Greek Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods to give humans, boosting their ego-consciousness (Loki).

The great disaster of these gods, like fire shooting up from a volcano in snowy Iceland, was Ragnarök. This horror involved a tidal wave, a ship steered by Loki, and the rising of the great evil serpent from below. Thor attacked the vicious *uroboros* serpent/dragon Jormungand and killed him, but his poisonous venom also killed Thor. Flames rose as the earth sank

beneath the waves (Davidson 1969, p. 122). The apocalypse theme is common in world mythology and religions, symbolizing the end of an era. Nordic myths, long-steeped in and brazen destruction, suffered from this perilous cloud of doomed fate.

## See Also

- [Animal Spirits](#)
- [Archetype](#)
- [Dragon Slaying](#)
- [Golden Bough, The](#)
- [Inflation](#)
- [Myth](#)
- [Polytheism](#)
- [Trickster](#)
- [Uroboros](#)

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## Love

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Love is a powerful force that connects and energizes people. It has long been a theme of religions

and literatures around the world. More recently, love has been studied by social scientists. This article surveys the major meanings of love, as used in various religions and in modern psychological thought.

## Introduction

Love means several different things. Other languages have two, three, or more words with different meanings, where English has only one, to use in many different situations. The authoritative *Oxford English Dictionary* describes over 30 uses of “love.” Like many writers, Scots poet Robert Burns (1759–1796) used literary devices to heighten the effects of his thoughts, e.g., “O, my luv’s like a red, red rose” – here, a simile to dramatize love’s power of attraction. In contrast, a modern definition strives for neutral objectivity: “Love is the creating and/or sustaining of the connections of mutual support in ever-widening ranges of significance” (Carothers 1968). Shakespeare noted love’s irrational mystery: “I know not why I love this youth, and I have heard you say, Love’s reason’s without reason” (Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, ca. 1609/1974, IV.2.20-22).

Here are some of love’s emphases:

1. A *desire for physical closeness* that connects people, to touch and be touched, whether they be sexual partners, parent and child, other family relations, or close friends.
2. *Compassion* of one person toward another, sometimes one who is in need. Altruistic self-sacrifice and empathic understanding of how another feels are components of such love, often recommended by religions.
3. A *mutual affinity* in a friendship that is not primarily sexual but emotional and value-laden, with shared interests and sensibilities and actions of mutual generosity.
4. A *religious regard* for another, where a human and a spiritual being (a god or a saint) are linked in a relationship of gratitude and devotion by the human and scrutiny and/or caring by the spiritual figure.

## Religion

The world’s five largest religions, arranged here from the oldest to the newest, are surveyed for their uses of love. Judaism, which provided the scriptural foundation of monotheism for Christianity and Islam, is also included.

*Hinduism*, the dominant religion of India and of Indians living elsewhere, is a sprawling, decentralized complex of many parts. Hence, the place of love in Hinduism is more diffuse compared to other religions. The following Sanskrit terms suggest the range of loving experiences. *Kama* is sensual pleasure and erotic love. It is also seen as a fundamental life force, a necessary ingredient in other human desires and strivings. *Karuna* refers to compassionate actions to reduce the sufferings of others. *Bhakti* is devotional love, adoration, and service directed at one’s chosen deity. *Prema* is an intense and altruistic longing for God and is considered Hinduism’s highest form of love.

*Judaism*, the religion of Jewish people worldwide, stresses ethical behavior and devotion to a single God, who formed a covenant relationship with “his people” in which he would protect, chasten, and love them while expecting their grateful adoration and obedience to his laws. This is elaborated in the Hebrew *Bible*, where love is translated from the words *ahab* and *khesed* (and their cognates) as desire, mercy, beloved, steadfast love, loyalty, kindness, devotion, and faithfulness.

The great ritual phrase, the *shema* (Deut. 6:4–5), calls upon the people of Israel to love God with all their heart, soul, and might. Elsewhere, God directs them to love their neighbors and also the stranger in their midst (Lev. 19:18 and 34). The prophet Hosea used the imagery of an unfaithful wife, lovingly sought out and forgiven by her husband, to stand for God’s undying love toward his sometimes unfaithful people.

In *Buddhism*, love has a central place: its founder, Siddhartha Gautama (563–483 BCE), is typically referred to as the “compassionate Buddha.” The earlier branch of Buddhism, called Hinayana or Theravada, focuses on love as *metta* (in Pali, or *maitri* in Sanskrit), a kindness or

benevolence toward all. The later branch, Mahayana, emphasizes *karuna*, compassion, and its ultimate embodiment in a bodhisattva, one who has attained full enlightenment. The bodhisattva most identified with loving compassion is Avalokiteśvara (Sanskrit), or Chenrezi in Tibet, often depicted with a multitude of arms and hands, to reach out and help multitudes.

Since Buddhism, a nontheistic religion, teaches that all reality is illusory, one's sense of self-importance is to be devalued, and one is to act as a vehicle of compassion toward others. The various schools of Buddhist meditation, based on deep psychological and philosophical analysis, may focus on neutralizing the mind of its self-centeredness or filling the mind with compassion toward others.

*Confucianism* has long been the dominant religion of China and of millions of ethnic Chinese overseas. Confucius (551–479 BCE) taught a version of right living, preserved in the *Analects*, which emphasized the good of society more than the individual. Confucian ethics codified the “five relationships,” which stressed “filial piety” (love as respect) between pairs of family members and others. Confucius taught that the “way of Heaven” (*T'ien*), or a moral life, should be lived by *jen* (translated as benevolence, uprightness, or love) and *li* (proper etiquette and rituals – to preserve social harmony). The Confucian emphasis, on reciprocity (mutual expectations of appropriate role behavior in social relations), was opposed by the radical views of Mo Ti, who followed Confucius about a century later. Mo Ti (or Tzu) promoted *ai*, a universal love that ignored all distinctions of rank or family position, which he said caused trouble. Mo Ti had many followers, but his ideas died out after the counter efforts of Mencius, a follower of Confucius. This conflict is an example of how different values, reciprocity and universality, can pull love in opposite directions.

*Christianity*, the world's largest religion, relies on the New Testament of the *Bible*, which used two Greek words for “love,” *agape* (self-sacrificing love) and *filia* (friendship love), while ignoring a third word, *eros* (erotic love), also in common usage then.

Jesus, the central figure of the New Testament and the Christ of Christianity, was a Jew living in a Jewish society in the land of Palestine, then governed politically by Roman rulers and religiously by Jewish high priests. Love was a major theme of Jesus' message. In the “great commandment” (Matt. 22:35–40, Mark 12:28–34, and Luke 10:25–28), Jesus rebutted Jewish leaders trying to entrap him doctrinally, saying that people should love God with all their heart, soul, and mind (or strength) *and* their neighbors as themselves – just as the scriptures had said earlier but in two separate passages (see Judaism, above). When asked a follow-up question, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus told the story of a compassionate Samaritan who helped an injured Jew, even though Samaritans were despised by Jews.

Jesus also preached the radical notion of loving one's enemies (Matt. 5:43–48 and Luke 6:27–28, 32–36). Twentieth-century examples are the effective nonviolent protest campaigns of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

During Jesus' ministry, his ethical message became layered with the additional identification of himself as the Son of God, as he anticipated his death, as a chronic disturber of the Jewish and Roman status quo, to be the necessary means of conveying God's ultimate message of self-sacrificing love: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. . .” (John 3:16).

After the death of Jesus (ca. 30–33 CE) and his followers' experience of his resurrection, the apostle Paul emerged as the leading missionary to the Gentiles (non-Jews). His letters to the non-Palestinian churches often develop the dual themes of God's salvational love through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus (now the Christ), plus the need for Christians to love one another. Paul made explicit the universal quality of this love of Christ that recognized no distinctions of gender, ethnicity, or social status (Gal. 3:28 and Rom. 10:12). Paul glorified the ultimate virtue of love in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13. A later apostle also wrote to exalt love, declaring that “God is love” (1 John 4:7–21).

St. Francis of Assisi (ca. 1182–1226 CE) expanded the scope of love to include animals and all of creation.

A tension has always existed between the commandment to love your neighbor *as yourself* and the *selfless* love exemplified by Jesus. A balance is needed between loving oneself too much and not enough: both extremes prevent one from loving God and others, although finding that balance can be difficult.

Modern Christian theology and devotional literature continue to confront this tension regarding “self” and the human tendency for self-serving self-deceptions. Psychology has also studied this tendency. Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote, “Goodness, armed with power, is corrupted; and pure love without power is destroyed” (Niebuhr 1937), a theme developed later by Paul Tillich (1954).

In *Islam*, God (Allah) is always referred to in the Koran (*Qur'an*) at the beginning of every chapter (sura) as “the merciful, the compassionate” or as “most gracious, most merciful.” These phrases come from one of four frequently used Arabic word groups that convey various Koranic nuances of love, from the roots of *hbb*, *rdy*, *rh*, and *wdd*.

Of the Five Pillars of Islam, the injunction to give alms to the poor is the one most directly connected to loving activity, but the Koran is suffused with themes of benevolence, kindness, and mercy – variants of love.

One movement within Islam is Sufism, which promotes an intimate personal connection between the believer and Allah through a mystical development of love.

*Overall*, the message about love from various religions might be summarized in interfaith terms something like these, with “God” representing the various names and conceptions of the Ultimate Reality or Ground of Being:

Love is what God is – the energy that binds Creation and all its creatures.

Love is what God offers *to* humans – a way to be Alive despite imperfections, anxieties, and suffering.

Love is what God expects *from* humans – respect for the Creator and all Creation, with awe at its vastness and complexity.

Love is what God desires *between* humans – to give unselfishly.

Across the spectrum of world religions, the importance of love – coming from God and human love toward God, self, and others – has been reinforced by many believers through specific methods: reading devotional literature and selected passages of scripture, reciting certain prayers and chants, and repeating certain ritual practices that emphasize love. Psychologically, a critical distinction exists between the effort to produce a desired *feeling* of love, by inculcating the ideal that one *should* feel loving, and the more achievable goal of practicing certain positive, loving-type *behaviors*, which in turn may make it more possible over time to experience loving feelings, along with some acceptance and closeness, toward persons and groups that formerly were avoided, disdained, and considered unlovable. Thus, a prejudice against others (“Do *NOT* love them”) can be neutralized through specific actions, which can enhance the development of loving feelings. This sequence, from deliberate actions leading to predictable (and desirable) feelings, while oversimplified here, is also a basic principle of psychology.

## Psychology

Psychology has studied love from five different perspectives: (1) as an individual emotion, especially in romantic love; (2) as individual behavior; (3) as a relationship between two (or more) people; (4) developmentally over time; and (5) socially as influenced by various social and cultural group norms. Psychotherapists also deal with the absence and failures of love in crumbling marriages, child neglect and abuse, adolescent problems, addictions, depression, and other anxious and lonely states.

1. Love as *a feeling of an individual* is a wonderful, tumultuous experience. In romantic love, a person who has “fallen” in love experiences a heightened sense of well-being: one feels special in the eyes of the beloved, understood as never before, with an improved sense of one’s sexual identity as a man or woman. One may be preoccupied by frequent thoughts

of the beloved or inspired to act in unusual ways on behalf of the beloved. Sexual desire – or at least the desire to touch, be physically close, and kiss – is a major part of romantic love, along with an idealization of the beloved. This is in contrast to a depersonalized lust for a sexual “object.”

The emotion of love contains strong elements of wish, hope, longing, and fantasy. What is often sought is a sense of being made whole, through closeness with another. This goal is also a theme of religious devotion: that divine love will make a flawed human whole, worthy of being loved by another being (human or spiritual) and capable of giving love to others.

Romantic love began in the twelfth century CE songs of European troubadours celebrating the courtly love of knights of chivalry, who labored dramatically to impress and woo their chosen, often married noblewomen. While this love never applied to the rest of the population, it did idealize the quest for a pure love (later portrayed by Dante and Petrarch), and it promoted tenderness and a better view of women (Hunt 1959).

2. Loving *behaviors by an individual* are many: touching and hugging, complimenting, offering help, paying attention to what the beloved is saying and feeling, sacrificing one’s time and money for the sake of the beloved, being on time and especially presentable, being patient with the other’s imperfections, and being willing to apologize for one’s own – to name a few. A lover’s complaints typically are about the partner’s behavior.

Psychology usually sees outward behavior as an indicator of a person’s inner motivation: we often convert our feelings into action. One is held responsible for how one behaves, but not for what one is feeling. Behavior, since it is normally under one’s control, can also be used to change one’s feelings – the opposite of emotions shaping behavior, as in psychodynamic theory (see an integration of psychodynamic and behavioral approaches at Weinberg 1981). Thus, a person can learn consciously to behave, and eventually feel more lovingly.

3. Love is *a relationship between two people* (or between a human and a divine being), and how the two respond to each other can be studied to see their patterns of interaction. Is there mutual respect between the two or domination by one? Is one person’s criticism usually followed by the other’s withdrawal or defensive outburst? Repeated arguments about money, in-laws, friends, or work often conceal an underlying concern: “Do you really love *me*?” In parent–child relations, does the parent feel (and act) mostly with tenderness, or frustration, or detachment? What kind of attachment behavior does the child show toward a parent: secure, avoidant, anxious/ambivalent, or disorganized (Cassidy and Shaver 1999)?

Love is also the commitment to a close relationship, i.e., dedicated to preserving and enhancing the relationship, for the sake of the well-being of both people, for as long as possible. This commitment is also for the sake of the relationship itself, sometimes despite the negative feelings of one or both of the parties involved – perhaps for the sake of other dependents. The commitment to loving another as much as oneself (see above, Love in Christianity) can be sorely tested when a chronic ailment of one person makes the relationship one-sided and the healthy one becomes a caregiver. Typically, long-term caregivers eventually develop “compassion fatigue” (the love wears thin) and become less caring and less healthy themselves. A rebalancing effort is then needed, whereby the caregiver deliberately shifts some attention and caring to himself/herself at least temporarily. Caring (loving) needs to be distributed to both self and the other, so that neither one gets all the attention and neither one suffers total neglect. Love in a committed relationship ideally is a dynamic arrangement with each person giving and receiving love in fluctuating amounts.

4. Love can be understood as *a process of development over time*. Erikson’s eight stages of human development (Erikson 1963) express this idea: adolescence is the stage for developing an identity (finding oneself), during

a period of experimentation after the childhood self has been discarded. But if identity is not adequately developed before entering the next stage, sharing intimacy with a partner in young adulthood, then the lover will not have enough of a developed self to share, and the relationship will suffer. On the other hand, while “puppy love” of earlier childhood may be mocked, developmentally it is age appropriate; it is the extent of love that youngsters are capable of, as they imitate adult behaviors and attitudes.

5. All of the above aspects of love take place within *systems of social expectations*. National, racial, religious, social class, and other cultural norms are always present, exerting limits on the permissible range and appropriate forms of expression of love. The family everywhere is a major human institution, upholding these wider norms and also containing its own private rules, rewards, and understandings of love. When a modernized culture emphasizes individualism, romantic love can happen freely, but where collective stability of the larger family or social system is emphasized, as in traditional cultures, such love is seen as a threat and arranged marriages are more typical.

Culture may also affect parent–child love when it favors one gender over the other. Birth order customs may require that the oldest and youngest child receive different kinds or amounts of love than other siblings (Toman 1976). A child’s inborn characteristics of temperament (Chess and Thomas 1984), intelligence, or sexual orientation may affect the ability of parents to love a child who is “different.” These psychosocial and situational factors contribute to making love a highly complex phenomenon.

Among psychological *theories* about love are these: *Freud* developed theories about basic drives (especially sex), unconscious wishes and fears, and delayed adult reactions to childhood emotional experiences, all with implications for human love. Freud turned the Golden Rule on its head: you will do to others (in the present) as you have been done unto (in your past). *Maslow* posited an ascending hierarchy of human needs, with

love midway (Maslow 1987). *Harlow* showed, by depriving young monkeys of their mothers, that the normal development of an infant requires what might be called primate love – a stable caregiver that can offer regular, warm physical contact; otherwise, adult mating and parenting abilities will be devastated (Blum 2002). *Sternberg* sees three dimensions to adult love: intimacy (sharing oneself), commitment (to the relationship), and passion (physical and emotional) (Sternberg and Weis 2006). In addition, *Rogers* believed that effective psychotherapy requires that a therapist demonstrate “unconditional positive regard,” a professional kind of loving (Rogers 1961).

The opposite of love may be hatred (another kind of powerful interpersonal connection), but sometimes it is the absence of love. A loveless childhood may lead to a loveless adulthood, where a person is unable to care about the feelings of anyone else – in the extreme, an unloving, antisocial personality, previously known as psychopathic or sociopathic. By comparison, the narcissistic personality has mostly given up on ever finding, yet secretly longs for, the love of another person.

Love can be austere: a self-help group uses the concept of “tough love” to help parents cope with the emotional manipulations of wayward offspring. In such situations, religion can remind one of the images of steadfast love, while psychology can recommend empathy, to feel in oneself the other’s distress and alienation, plus the objective compassion of therapy.

The philosophy of existentialism has contributed Buber’s “I-Thou” relationship as a model for responsible loving (Buber 1923/2000) and Sartre’s comment that there was no such thing as love, only loving acts.

In summary, love, while subject to various interpretations by different psychologies (and also religions), is a prominent, complex, and sometimes problematical feature of close personal relationships. Growth in love relationships usually requires persistence in communications of all sorts to nurture the relationship, honesty about one’s shortcomings, willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of the relationship, and



acceptance of a measure of uncertainty in our still-limited understanding of how, why, and when love fails or succeeds.

*In conclusion*, while scientific research will continue to study love's intricacies, and psychological understandings will continue to enhance our ways of improving interpersonal relationships, religion (and popular culture) will continue to put forward the belief that love is both necessary and mysterious – a positive force in human relations that we all can be thankful for.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Luther, Martin

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## The Rise of a Reformer

Martin Luther (1483–1546) was born on March 10, 1483, in the small Saxon town of Eisleben. His father, Hans Luther, a peasant turned copper miner, was shrewd, hardworking, and prosperous. In 1501, Luther commenced studies in philosophy at the University of Erfurt, where Ockham's nominalistic philosophy (or the *via moderna*) contended with the prevailing Thomistic worldview. In 1505, at his father's urging, he embarked on the study of law. One day, shortly after, he was stranded in a field during an immense thunderstorm and was so shaken by the experience that he vowed to St. Anne that he would enter a monastery if she spared his life. The storm abated, and to his father's considerable disappointment, he kept his promise, entering an Augustinian monastery in Erfurt. He was ordained in 1507, and the following year, he followed his mentor, Dr. Johannes von Staupitz, to Wittenberg to found an Augustinian university, which was outspokenly critical of medieval scholasticism and Aristotelian philosophy. For the following 10 years, Luther studied, lectured, and prayed dutifully. But his anger toward Roman – and increasingly Papal authority – grew steadily, influenced in part by *In Praise of Folly* (1511) by Erasmus of Rotterdam, a leading Hebraist and humanist, who criticized the practice of selling "indulgences." On the eve of All

Saints Day in October, 1517, Luther published 95 theses of his own criticizing the sale of indulgences. (The story about Luther nailing his theses to the door of the Cathedral is apocryphal. There were no eyewitnesses!) As his fame and notoriety grew, so did his theological daring. In the space of a few years, he went from criticizing a lucrative and hypocritical (but highly specific) practice of the Church to challenging the basic legitimacy of the Pope's authority, eventually labeling him the "anti-Christ."

## Luther and Erasmus

While he leaned on him initially, Luther broke with Erasmus and the humanists in 1525. Erasmus resembled Aristotle and St. Thomas in having some faith in our innate sociability, in our ability to govern ourselves, and in the efficacy of good works, carried out in the proper spirit, to ennobel and edify the human spirit (Green 1964). Some humanists and their fellow travelers, the Unitarians, even allowed for the possibility that Jews, Muslims, and Hindus, if they conducted their lives in a Christian spirit, could commend themselves to God and be welcomed into Heaven in the hereafter.

Heresy! thundered Luther. Salvation is always an unmerited gift of God. There is nothing we can do in this world to really merit salvation. Luther argued that works without faith are of no avail, and indeed are idolatry, and that only those who embrace Jesus Christ as their personal savior will enter the kingdom of heaven. By some accounts, at the end of his life, Luther hated Erasmus even more than he hated the Pope! Another contentious issue was that Erasmus and his circle interpreted scripture allegorically, for the most part, and made ample allowance for the existence of more than one valid interpretation of a text. Though not enamored of Aristotle, whose authority was generally invoked to stifle rather than to promote free inquiry, at least in those days, Erasmus and the humanists also acknowledged the wisdom of many pagan poets and philosophers, arguing that they are perfectly compatible with

a Christian way of life. In short, they were averse to a rigid or doctrinaire attitude toward religious faith. Not so Luther. Though he put a selective emphasis on certain Biblical texts, and deliberately ignored others, Luther maintained that the Bible is the literal and infallible word of God. He also claimed to know precisely what the Bible meant in any given instance, even if the text itself was deeply obscure to other learned commentators who were more deeply versed in Hebrew and Greek – like Erasmus.

Apart from their doctrinal differences, Erasmus was repulsed by the violence of Luther's feelings and exhortations and the copious bloodshed that accompanied the Reformation. Erasmus deplored violence and spotted Luther's tendencies in that direction early on. Reflecting on their disparate agendas, Erasmus said: "I layed a hen's egg; Luther hatched a bird of quite a different breed" (Green 1964, p. 164). Despite these differences, Luther and Erasmus shared the belief that the Bible should be accessible to all. In fact, Luther stressed that *all* men should read the Bible and pray in their own tongue, rather than in Latin. This doctrinal shift not only undermined the Roman monopoly on the reading and interpretation of scripture but placed a considerable premium on literacy, creating an urgent demand for public education – an idea unheard of in feudal times. Fortunately for Luther, it also coincided with the invention of the Gutenberg's printing press, and Gutenberg himself became a staunch ally, printing hundreds of Luther's pamphlets to spread opposition to Rome and its cunning machinations to enslave men's souls. But while it hastened the dissolution of the feudal order (and the creation of public schools), Luther sought to keep certain features of the feudal hierarchy intact. Luther's religious revolution undermined the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Rome but enjoined strict obedience to secular authority – even for unfortunate peasants who were thrust to the brink of destitution and beyond (Green 1964). Indeed, a pamphlet entitled *Against the Thievish and Murderous Hordes of Peasants* (1525) explicitly encouraged German princes to suppress peasant revolts with ruthless violence – which they did, of course.

## Marxist and Freudian Readings

Luther's behavior in the peasant wars (1524–1526) invited a Marxist interpretation, and in 1936, Herbert Marcuse published a brief study on Luther in a series called *Studies in Authority*, published by Felix Alcan (Paris) and reprinted in *Studies in Critical Philosophy* (Marcuse 1973). Marcuse construed Luther's authoritarian tendencies and his growing contempt for the peasantry as an early expression of a nascent bourgeoisie starting to flex its muscles, because it was linked, in his mind, to Roman law, which Luther studied before entering the monastery. (Roman law was used by the burghers of Luther's era to undermine or circumvent the legal constraints on commerce imposed by the Church.) In *Young Man Luther*, the best known biography of Luther by a psychoanalyst (Erikson 1958), Erik Erikson chided Marxists for being one sided and reductionistic in their emphasis on economic motives and inattentive to the powerful "psychic reality" behind Luther's teaching. But even he conceded the element of truth in these approaches.

In 1941, Horkheimer and Adorno drew clear links between Luther's anti-Semitic statements and the then-current Nazi propaganda in a report on their "*Research Project on Anti-Semitism*" (Horkheimer and Adorno 1941). Initially, in more charitable moods, Luther had explained the Jewish refusal to convert to Christianity as rooted in a sensible mistrust for the Papacy and the pagan elements (including "Mariolatry") that Catholicism had introduced into Christian teaching. For a few years, Luther even deluded himself into thinking that once he had purged the Christian faith of these sordid accretions, the Jews would convert *en masse*. However, after many abortive efforts to convert local Jewry, in 1543, at age 60, Luther exhorted his contemporaries:

First, to set fire to their synagogues or schools. Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed.

Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such adultery, lies, cursing and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them.

Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb.

Fifth, I advise that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for Jews.

Sixth, I advise that... all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them.

Seventh... Let whomsoever can, throw brimstone and pitch upon them, so much the better... and if this be not enough, let them be driven like mad dogs from the land (cited in Burston 2007: 115).

This inflammatory speech was not an isolated incident. Luther's last sermon was another attack upon Jews, and the Kristallnacht pogrom which swept Germany in 1938 was deliberately timed to coincide with Luther's birthday. Luther's utterances were often read in Protestant Churches during the Nazi era to incite violence and hatred toward Jews (Burston 2007).

Erik Erikson's biography *Young Man Luther* minimized Luther's anti-Semitic outbursts and his destructive attitude toward peasants, dwelling instead on Luther's audacity, originality, resilience, sincerity, and wit. While more sympathetic than many treatments of Luther's life, Erikson did strain credulity at times. He credited Luther's confessor, von Staupitz, with rare therapeutic abilities that supposedly saved the sanity of this prodigiously gifted but deeply disturbed young man and helped him find his "voice" and to trust his own, inner authority, though von Staupitz remained completely loyal to the Church. Odder still, Erikson interpreted a disputed passage in Luther's *Table Talk* to mean that the decisive moment in his religious development – Luther's epiphany – took place while he was evacuating his bowels. Erikson reasoned that for someone who suffers from chronic constipation, having a splendid bowel movement could easily engender a "religious" experience, an idea echoed by Norman O. Brown 2 years later, in *Life Against Death* (Brown 1960). If Erikson was right, Luther was the first (and perhaps *only*) specimen of *homo religiosus* to have his crucial revelation during the act of defecation. W. H. Auden welcomed Erikson's interpretation. According to Auden (1960):

There must be many people to whom religious, intellectual or artistic insights have come in the same place, for excretion is both the primal creative act - every child is the mother of its own feces - and the primal act of revolt and repudiation of the past - what was once good food has become bad dirt and must be gotten rid of. From then on, Luther's fate became his own (Auden 1960, p. 17).

Well, perhaps. But if many people have religious experiences while defecating, very few actually report them. So the question becomes: why did Luther, of all people, have this experience? Or more to the point: did he, really? We may never know, but in retrospect, Luther's epiphany probably did *not* occur in the way or in the place that Erikson imagined it. Luther's account is worded more ambiguously than Erikson allowed and could be construed as saying that the blessed event occurred in meditation cells *adjacent* to the monastery's privy (Green 1964; Marius 1999). But whatever you believe on this point, the fact remains that Luther was an intriguing character. He attacked the selling of indulgences and cult of saintly relics with a clarity and indignation worthy of Voltaire. But he was also deeply superstitious, a believer in witchcraft, who claimed to literally "see" demons and evil spirits lurking about the Prussian landscape. As a good medieval cleric must, Luther dutifully reviled "the flesh," echoing centuries of Christian tradition. But he was bitterly opposed to priestly celibacy, spoke frankly of conjugal pleasures, and, in later years, ate and drank with deliberate abandon to "mock the devil" – or, as Erikson said, to chase away bouts of anxiety and depression. A man of great vigor and industry, who survived three epidemics of bubonic plague and lived to the age of 63, Luther was also a legendary neuroathletic, who was prone to bouts of constipation and dizziness and other diffuse bodily ailments. But for all his faults and frailties, Luther was still

what Hegel termed a "world-historical individual," whose writings, utterances, and deeds transformed the world irrevocably, for good and for ill. His illustrious contemporaries included Copernicus, Erasmus, Thomas More, Rabelais, and Machiavelli – the last of the medievals or first of the moderns, depending on how you juggle your historical schemata. Looking backwards, it is hard to think of a generation who had more impact on modernity than they. And with the possible exception of Copernicus, Luther was the most influential of them all.

## See Also

- [Christianity](#)
- [Erikson, Erik](#)

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